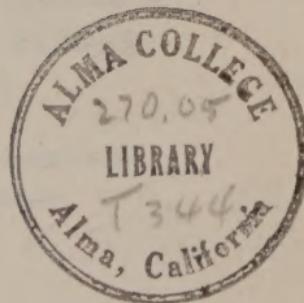


SAINT TERESA OF
THE CHILD JESUS

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SAINT TERESA OF THE CHILD JESUS

Four Studies by P. de Puniet, O.S.B.; M. V. Bernadot, O.P.; Fr. Jérôme de la Mère de Dieu, O.C.D.; and E. M. Lajeunie, O.P. Translated from the French by a Dominican of Headington



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FROM "LA VIE SPIRITUELLE," JULY, 1924

"FROM all quarters we have received requests that the studies which appeared in the May number of *La Vie Spirituelle* should be published in book form. We willingly consent, being assured that the book will be useful. A letter written from one Carmel says: 'So far, nothing so good has been written on Blessed Teresa.' 'This is the real Teresa,' says a second Carmel. And the Carmel of P. . . . writes: 'We have just read your May number, and are enthusiastic about it. You show our Blessed Teresa in her true light. The hidden treasures of her soul have never before been so fully set forth. . . .'"

FOREWORD

La Vie Spirituelle, from which the following translation has been drawn, was founded some five years ago by the Dominican Theological Faculty at St Maximin to further the exposition and development of the great patristic tradition as embodied and organized in the theology of St Thomas and St John of the Cross on the spiritual life. Four successive Pontiffs had, as Archbishop McIntyre has recently recalled, by deliberate and sustained action, raised St Thomas Aquinas to the position of official theological exponent of the doctrine of the Church in faith and morals. The full significance of this step in the province of ethics and morals is, perhaps, only just beginning to be realized. For the *Prima Secundae* and the *Secunda Secundae* of the *Summa Theologica* contain an organic body of doctrine on the *motus creaturae rationalis in Deum*, which is the theological explanation of the nature and growth of the spiritual life from the bare observance of the Commandments to the highest exercise of virtue and contemplation.

The four articles which make up this book are a translation from the *Vie Spirituelle* for May, 1924, which treats of the life and writings of St Teresa of Lisieux in the light of the doctrine of St Thomas. Their study will lead to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the simple way to the heights of

holiness which it was St Teresa's providential mission to broadcast over the wide world.

HAWKESYARD PRIORY,
May, 1925.

NOTE

Thanks are due to Brother Cyprian Rice, O.P., for translating from the latest critical Spanish edition of the works of St John of the Cross the quotations on pp. 21-23, and emending in other passages the English translation by David Lewis, which is that elsewhere followed in quotations from the saint's writings.

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ST TERESA OF THE CHILD JESUS

ON April 29, 1923, the Sovereign Pontiff beatified a young Frenchwoman, Teresa Martin,* who was born at Alençon, January 2, 1873, and died at the Carmel of Lisieux, September 30, 1897, in her twenty-fifth year. Had she lived, she would have been fifty years old in that year 1923, when Rome, moved by the irresistible impulse of the Catholic world, raised her to the altars. There is no exaggeration in saying that Sister Teresa has enthusiastic votaries in the five continents. But how came a mere girl to make so great a stir in so short a time? Our readers know; for who has not read *Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux*? What Catholic has not heard of some miracle of the lovable wonder-worker, who, as she promised, "spends her heaven in doing good upon earth"? We shall not recount her life, beautiful in its simplicity, nor the marvels that she is everywhere working. The aim of the following pages is rather to consider her teaching, for we must acknowledge that St Teresa is sometimes misunderstood. Some have been deceived by appearances, and have failed to discover the true foundations of her lowly life. And we may exonerate them by admitting that pious literature of a certain class has helped to main-

* Canonized in May, 1925.

tain this impression—an impression at least misleading, perhaps even false. Also the style of the autobiography itself, often childish, and extremely simple, may have deceived certain careless and superficial readers.

Yet the writings of Sister Teresa are full of sound, deep and traditional doctrine. It is this spiritual teaching, in full conformity with the great theological and mystical tradition, that we would bring into relief. It would be one more demonstration, and in a particularly interesting case, that the whole spiritual life should have a basis of solid instruction, and that love springs from truth.

M. V. BERNADOT, O.P.

THE ASCETIC LIFE OF ST TERESA : HER COURAGE

IT is extremely interesting and instructive for us to observe the extent to which secondary causes become the sport of the Creator's omnipotence. Providence delights in confounding our poor, narrow, human views, and in bringing to naught the ideas we thought best founded. This subversion of things dates especially from the Incarnation, and has often recurred throughout the ages. To-day more than ever divine grace uses the smallest events for its manifestation, and very often the work achieved has no apparent relation with the weakness of the means employed.

Until the last century Lourdes was the most obscure and least-known of small mountain towns. A poor child, without human means and quite uneducated, comes upon the scene; and at the simple story of her visions the whole world is moved, and flocks in dense crowds to the miraculous grotto.

The great wonder-worker of our age, beatified in 1924 and canonized in 1925, in answer to every Catholic's heartfelt desire—whose memory is blessed, whose favours are proclaimed throughout the whole world, who works unsparingly for everyone, is a contemplative who hardly knew the world outside her monastic enclosure. In this feverishly active age

the humble Carmelite gives us a rare lesson of peace and silence.

St Teresa of the Child Jesus had received a definite mission from heaven; this His Holiness Benedict XV expressly recognized, and pointed out emphatically that no one might overlook it. This child of grace came from God to teach her "little way" of spiritual childhood to all without distinction, to the humble who already followed it, as well as to the learned who perhaps need it more. Therein lies "the secret of sanctity" for every soul.*

Sister Teresa was perfectly conscious of this very special mission. She knew that she was to make her little way known to others, and so bring them to love God. Her whole life preached this way of childhood, for she was herself an example of the perfect simplicity, boundless trust and joyous abandonment which are its characteristics. She clung very specially to the virtue of children, which is to love the father who has given them everything. Little, poor and weak as she was, she surrendered herself passionately to divine love, to merciful love; she let God carry her in his arms: and this was her means of attaining sanctity.†

But we must not overlook the strength of soul, the courage and untiring generosity that lie hidden under

* Benedict XV in his *Discourse* at the publication of the Decree of the Heroic nature of the Virtues of St Teresa. The full text is given in the appendix to the recent work, *Bienheureuse Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus. Histoire d'une ame*, Lisieux, 1923.

† These are the ideas developed by Fr. Martin in *La Petite Voie*. The study is careful and interesting. It is a little book which seems destined to do much good.

the outward charm of this spiritual childhood which "little Teresa" lived so perfectly, and which her lovable example has made so alluring. Of this it was not necessary that she should be fully conscious; it sufficed that its reality should be shown in her life. It is true this courage is, as it were, merged in the depths of divine love, where Teresa is in her element. The love of God was the furnace which enkindled the fire of her generosity; love was the mainspring of all her actions; love was their stainless vesture. From this point of view there is nothing to add to the attractive sketch recently published by the Carmelites of Lisieux, *L'Esprit de la Bienheureuse Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus.** These notes and reminiscences clearly show that Teresa's love of God was the spring which fertilized her whole spiritual life. It was her great, or rather her only, means. She asked nothing of God but love; her one desire was to give "love for love"; her one ambition "to make Love loved." These are her favourite expressions, and her whole soul is in these few words. Her love was therefore generous, disinterested, ardent, consuming; it demanded complete self-immolation; therefore it took everything, and left nothing of Teresa which it did not fill, purify, transform and deify. Henceforward everything was the prey of love in that childlike soul, that happy soul, whose aspirations are summed up in the device, "To live by love."

Having shown the source which fed the heroic

* Taken from her writings and the account of eyewitnesses of her life. Lisieux, 1923.

virtues of St Teresa, we may be allowed to look for a moment at the glorious blossoming which divine charity brought forth in her. The just man is “*like a tree which is planted near the running waters which shall bring forth its fruit in due season. And his leaf shall not fall off: and all whatsoever he shall do shall prosper.*”* “*Bud forth as the rose planted by the brooks of waters, give ye a sweet odour of frankincense. Send forth flowers as the lily, and yield a smell, and bring forth leaves in grace, and praise with canticles, and bless the Lord in his works.*”†

In Teresa of the Child Jesus divine love brought forth marvellous fruits, of which courage was one of the most magnificent. She whose life was enveloped in such delightful simplicity, she, so frail, so delicate, and at the end so ailing, has left us a true manifestation of supernatural and divine strength: and it was in this very weakness and littleness that she found the secret of that energy which amazes us by its constancy.

Teresa knew she was poor and without ability. “*He that is mighty hath done great things to me,*” she said simply, “and the greatest is that he has shown me my littleness and how incapable I am of anything good.”‡ And she loved to say: “*My very weakness makes me strong.*”§ “*Is there on the face*

* Ps. i 3.

† Alleluia of the Mass for the Feast of St Teresa. The words are taken from Eccl. xxxix 17, 19.

‡ *Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux*, chapter ix. The quotations are from the English translation, published by Burns, Oates and Washbourne, Ltd.

§ Letter III to Mother Agnes of Jesus.

of this earth a soul more feeble than mine? And yet precisely because I am feeble it has delighted thee to accede to my least and most childlike desires.”* Teresa was aware of her poverty, but the more she recognized her weakness the more she experienced the fulness of God’s strength.

There is no question here of a merely natural courage. Doubtless grace perfected a richly endowed nature; but grace, and grace alone, with all its divine characteristics, is revealed in that courage which Teresa showed constantly to her life’s end.

It will be both pleasant and profitable to glean a few ears in the fertile field of her virtues, to see how they sprang up amidst suffering, and finally to prove how they ripened under the influence of the divine Sun.

From her earliest years the child of benediction, who was to be beatified so soon after her death, heard God’s mysterious call. While she was still a mere baby, grace was active in her soul, and preparing it for great favours. Nature yielded at length to the sublime vocation to which grace destined her, but not without feeling contrary attractions. The ground was certainly well prepared; none the less, it required constant toil. Like the rest of us, the future saint experienced difficulties, delays and repugnances; she had to conquer her faults, to control her feelings. Like others—perhaps more than many—she met with contradictions; she drank long draughts of the “waters of humiliation”; in short, she was as the rest of men, and this was of supreme import, so that her “little way” might be accessible to all.

* *Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux*, chapter xi.

She learnt self-conquest very early. As a tiny child she was attracted to virtue, and joyously practised little acts of self-denial. She was happy when she had succeeded in gaining a small victory by accepting a correction without flinching, or resisting the common temptation to make excuses. She already had a taste for penance and solitude; like her patron saint of old, she thought of flying to some lonely place—a characteristic detail, for she was to have much of the courage of her mother, St Teresa of Avila. Did she not ask, in her childish fervour, to enter Carmel at the age of nine? It was a little precocious! She was forced to wait until she was fifteen, and God knows the obstacles she had to overcome; but with astonishing strength of soul she conquered all difficulties.*

She began to feel an attraction for suffering; and God seemed to encourage her to follow it, since, as she wrote later, on her confirmation day she received strength to suffer, "a gift needed sorely, for the martyrdom of my soul was soon to begin." This was a truly characteristic grace: fortitude, of all the gifts of the Spirit of Love, had the fullest dominion over her, in view of the struggles to come. She expected martyrdom of soul; soon, at the Coliseum, she asked the grace to be martyred for Jesus; and on her profession day, September 8, 1890, the same Spirit of fortitude who inspired this burning love, dictated this prayer: "Jesus! I ask that

* The Church herself reminds us of this in the fifth lesson of St Teresa's beautiful Office: "Multas ad religiosam vitam amplectandam nacta est difficultates, quibus tamen *mirabili animi fortitudine* superatis, Lexoviensem Carmelum tandem est ingressa."

for thy sake I may die a martyr: give me martyrdom of soul or body. Or rather give me both the one and the other."

She herself has related how she underwent her first martyrdom—that of scruples—and how she was freed from it by the striking grace of Christmas Day, 1886. "By becoming weak and little for love of me, Jesus made me strong and brave; he put his own weapons into my hands so that I went from victory to victory." She recovered her strength of soul "lost at the age of four and a half," a candid avowal which marks the beginning of the achievements which were to follow.

At that moment there awoke within her a passion for our Saviour's cross: she longed to stand always in spirit at its foot to receive the divine dew, and pour it out upon souls. Her mission became visible, and she fulfilled it by standing there at her post. Thenceforward she was consumed with thirst for souls: she had heard the *Sitio*—mysteriously suppliant—of the Crucified, and she could not forget it. Thenceforth she began her conquest of perishing souls throughout the world.

When Teresa Martin entered Carmel at fifteen years old, she yielded to the irresistible attraction which from the very dawn of her life had been calling her into solitude. Into that solitude she withdrew to serve her beloved Lord, and give herself wholly to his love; but she was also urged by zeal for the salvation of souls. "I have come," she said, "to save souls, and especially to pray for priests. One cannot attain the end without adopting the means;

and as our Lord made me understand that it was by the cross he would give me souls, the more crosses I met with, the stronger grew my attraction to suffering.”* That was the true object of her vocation, which was one of devotedness, love and compassion. She saw clearly that to follow it meant work, toil and suffering. She knew the cross awaited her; but, fascinated, she hailed it with a smile, and clasped it with all her strength. She would make it the weapon of her warfare, and the means to her conquest. “Souls, by the cross!” “Jesus has always treated me as a spoilt child,” she wrote two months before her death. . . . “It is true that his cross has been with me from the cradle, but for that cross he has given me a passionate love.”

From the height of the Saviour’s blessed cross, suffering, as she herself said, welcomed her with outstretched arms from her very entrance into the monastery. Nothing could be more logical; it is the law of those who truly cleave to Christ. She accepted suffering as a friend she had learnt to cherish. Nature—as she was not ashamed to confess—would have counselled retreat, but she, like a dauntless soldier, resolved to stand firm, to stay at her post and, come what might, never forsake it. Yet her weakness was extreme; she felt herself so poor, so helpless. But her trust grew unceasingly in proportion to her littleness; her strength came from her very weakness. She accustomed herself “to lean only on the divine strength,” and with that she was ready for everything.

* *Saint Thérèse of Lisieux*, chapter vii.

While her supernatural character was thus developing, her bodily strength began to decline. The strict observance of Carmel, the more than austere diet, especially the cold, of which she suffered "almost to death," soon undermined her delicate constitution. Yet such was her courage that it was long before those about her knew how grave was her state. Her constant joy, her good spirits, and the sweet serenity of her face seemed to indicate vigorous health, and to reveal a soul immersed in peace and light, if not in spiritual delights. God alone knew the reality—the anguish and dark night through which that brave soul was passing, and the trials that assailed her. But nothing of all this troubled her, nothing affrighted her, nothing even astonished her. She still had absolute confidence in her God, and her courage never failed for a moment: hers was more than common patience and endurance.

Her courage, however, was not that which turns to face great perils, and runs to meet obstacles and difficulties. Teresa loved and cherished suffering; when it came, she met it with a smile. But she did not seek it; a time came when she ceased even to desire it: in truth, it was only love she sought. She fully realized that great austerities were not for her. Once she wore an instrument of penance more than was good for her, and it made her ill. She gave it up cheerfully; that method of warfare was not within her reach.

Neither was it her vocation to provoke the enemy, nor to brave him by challenges and deeds of daring. On the contrary, her usual tactics—always successful

—were to turn and fly at his approach. This was to show him contempt—the only treatment the devil deserves, and the most effectual in baffling his deceitful stratagems; nay, in dealing with this craven seducer, it is true bravery, and Sister Teresa was perfectly right in calling it courage.*

Her real courage, her real strength—or rather the divine strength in her, for of herself she was nothing but weakness—was not in attacking, but in “holding on,” standing firm at her post without fail, for days, weeks, months, years. . . . There are many ways of keeping at one’s post; all are glorious, though unequally esteemed by men. This was St Teresa’s courage; and it must be admitted that herein lies true fortitude far more than in assault, however heroic. “Endurance is more difficult than aggression. . . . Endurance implies length of time, whereas aggression is consistent with sudden movements; and it is more difficult to remain unmoved for a long time than to be moved suddenly to something arduous” which demands effort.†

Teresa was consumed with desire to labour for the Church, and so prove her love for God.‡ She called her boundless desires “the most grievous of martyrdoms.” “Notwithstanding my exceeding littleness,” she wrote, “I dare to gaze upon the divine Sun of love, and I burn to dart upwards unto him! . . . What is to become of me? . . . Must

* Her actual words are: “This is an odd kind of courage, undoubtedly; but I think it is best not to expose oneself in the face of certain defeat” (chapter ix, p. 153).—TRANSLATORS.

† St Thomas, II IIae, Q. 123, Art. 6.

‡ *Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux*, chapter xi.

I die of sorrow because of my helplessness? Oh no! With daring self-abandonment there will I remain until death, my gaze fixed upon that divine Sun. Nothing shall affright me, nor wind nor rain. . . . And should impenetrable clouds conceal the Orb of Love . . . that would be the hour in which to push my confidence to its uttermost bounds. I should not dare to detach my gaze. . . .”

We know the spot she had especially chosen as the post where she would stay—like a faithful soldier of the King: it was the foot of the cross. There she stood with our Lady, her sweet Mother; there she learnt to suffer in loving, to imitate the Saviour, and “to save souls who will love him through eternity.” She was there to catch the blood flowing from the sacred wounds, and, without rest or respite, to pour it forth bountifully upon her fellow-men. She would have given everything to save souls, and make them grow in love.

Her courage and fortitude, nourished in suffering, developed at the foot of the cross, in the form of a devotedness that knew no bounds. For the sake of the souls she held dear, Teresa was filled with the zeal of an apostle, the chivalrous valour of a crusader; and her weapon was always the cross, which our Lord had deigned to give her as her “portion.”* This meant deep and constant communion with the divine Victim sacrificed for all men. Here, when all is said and done, is the secret motive power of her ever-watchful activity and her incredible courage; here is the explanation of the wonders she is con-

* Act of Oblation to Merciful Love, June 9, 1895.

tinually working. The bountiful shower of rose leaves which fall upon men shows her gracious human side, and the outward and sensible effects of her action. But the generous and joyous self-immolation after the example of Jesus still remains unperceived, as the charm of her youth and natural gifts hid it in her lifetime.

This immolation, which is the greatest heroism, fed her zeal for souls, and gave her ever new energies. Like her mother, St Teresa of Avila, knowing herself to be "a daughter of the Church," she burned with desire to devote herself to the Church's needs, and to souls, that Love might be loved. This was her ever-growing ambition, and henceforth her courage knew no bounds. For she knew that to count on God's strength in working for the salvation of souls is to render the greatest homage to grace. "Alas!" she said regretfully, "on this earth it is hard indeed to find souls who do not measure God's omnipotence by their own narrow thoughts." They do not realize the immense good they could do, having God within them, so ready to give his help. "I prefer," added Teresa joyously, "to own in all simplicity that 'He that is mighty hath done great things to me'"—*Magnificat anima mea Dominum, quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est.*"*

So she was conscious of the wonderful strength God had given her by his grace alone, seeing all the more clearly her own weakness; and she ceased not to work bravely for others, ever active—"souls on fire can never remain inactive"—and always for

* Offertory of the Mass of St Teresa.

others. "I cannot economize," she said delightfully; "all my earnings are immediately spent on the ransom of souls."* It was to be the same to the end. Bodily suffering increased day by day, together with interior trials and deep anguish of soul; she was drawing near to the final combat. But love was growing in proportion, and it kindled in her heart a passion for the happiness of others; this is the crown of courage. So the great St Teresa had long before accurately remarked when writing of the seventh mansion of her *Interior Castle*. This is the zenith of charity, the highest summit of perfection, where God's action is most strikingly evident:

"Doubtless by its becoming one with the Almighty, by the union of Spirit with spirit, the soul must gather strength as we know the saints did, to suffer and to die. Such a one suffers much during this life, for whatever works she may perform, her soul has energy for far greater tasks and goads her on to do more, so that all she can perform seems nothing to her. This must be the reason of the severe penances performed by many of the saints (especially the glorious Magdalen, who had always spent her life in luxury). This caused the hunger felt by our Father Elias for the honour of God, and the desires of St Dominic and St Francis to draw souls to praise the Almighty. I assure you that forgetful of themselves, they must have passed through no small trials. This, my Sisters, is what I would have us strive for . . . not for our own enjoyment, but to gain strength to serve God."†

Supernatural courage can hardly go farther, and its characteristics should be noted: burning zeal for

* *Counsels and Reminiscences*, appendix to her life.

† St Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle*, Seventh Mansion, chapter iv. The quotations from St Teresa's works throughout this book are from the Stanbrook translation.

God's glory, thirst to win souls to his love and praise, utter self-forgetfulness. Thus does God show his strength in souls entirely divested of self. Stripped of all, reduced to nothing, they feel their energies for good increasing. "God, seeing that they now live only for his glory and the service of others, increases tenfold their strength, their aptitudes and their means. It would be difficult to describe the deep compassion, the ardent zeal and the limitless devotion of a soul thus united to God and transformed into him."*

St Teresa unconsciously fulfilled these glorious conditions of the life of union. Ruysbroeck, one of the acknowledged masters of the spiritual life, makes the gift of fortitude in its highest degree the characteristic of those marvels which Teresa was herself experiencing. Thus, according to him, works born of this divine gift are made manifest. "Under its powerful influence the heart has already been set free, and all the powers of the soul, its desire and praise, ennobled, and uplifted even to contemplating the high things of God, the wisdom, the goodness, the liberality and fathomless riches that flow from the sublime unity; but from that time a man realizes that he is very far from rendering the praise, honour and just reverence which he owes to God. He then thinks of poor souls who have gone astray, and feels a deep spiritual pity in considering their sorry plight. . . . From this thought the soul comes back to the contemplation of God's infinite

* Madame l'Abbesse de Sainte-Cécile, *La vie spirituelle et l'oraison*, chapter xix. (Eng. trans., *Spiritual Life and Prayer*.)

goodness, his liberality, compassion and mercy, at the same time clearly seeing the miseries to be relieved. Now, from this contemplation and this consideration springs a great love for God and for all men. . . . It is the source of secret prayer so powerful that it achieves unutterable things. For God's goodness is shown with such wealth and liberality . . . that it gives great boldness to him who prays, and makes him believe that he will have all he desires. He plunges into the infinite goodness of God, knowing well that his love for us is boundless. . . .”*

Thus did the servant of God reach the summit of charity; the union was consummated—that intimate union of spirit with spirit which supposes absolute conformity, or rather the fusion of two wills, the soul's and her Lord's. Now, if ever, was the time for her to be prodigal of herself for the great interests of God. “O my Jesus, I will do battle for thy love until the evening of my life,” Teresa had promised; now she was keeping her word. She fought heroically and unceasingly, losing nothing of her sweet serenity or childlike simplicity, until the dawn of September 30, 1897. The darkness of tribulation had deepened about her; during the last six weeks of her life she was deprived of daily communion, which had been her one remaining consolation. “The bread of tears” was henceforth her food, and she generously consented “to feed upon that alone.”

* Ruysbroeck, *Le Royaume des amants de Dieu*, chapter xxii. Traduction des Benedictins de St Paul de Wisques, t. ii, pp. 124-125.

On the morning of her last day the suffering became a paroxysm, and the destruction of nature was complete. She wished to die a death of love, "that of Jesus on the cross"; her wish was fully granted. This valiant soul, always simple, even at the last, avoiding the least self-introspection, thought only of saving souls—"Not seeking that which is profitable to myself, but to many." The rule of perfection given by the Apostle, and so fittingly recalled in the Office of St Teresa, was fully accomplished.* The saint held fast to her ideal—to work untiringly and to wrestle for souls so that Love might be loved, the perfect crown of charity, the supreme achievement of the splendid courage that had filled her whole life.

But this was not to be the end of her wonderful story; it is continued in heaven. Her resolution of love and generous labour has followed her into eternity. Day by day she fulfils for us the daring promise she had already made in her charming naïveté: "I will spend my heaven in doing good upon earth. . . . There can be no rest for me until the end of the world. . . . My desire in heaven will be the same as on earth—to love Jesus and make him loved."

Such appears to us St Teresa of the Child Jesus in all her delightful simplicity, but girded also with divine strength. She is ever the humble and helpless child who comes from God to teach us her

* Ninth Lesson, taken from the thirty-seventh sermon of St Leo.

“little way” of confidence and abandonment which is so practical. She is also the “little flower,” so simple and hidden, but a little flower which could open wide to the heavenly dew, and feared not to attribute too much to the grace of God. She yielded herself wholly and freely to the divine possession. She knew no prudent reserves, and never thought of setting limits to the action of her God. Having given him everything—her will, her sufferings, above all her love, her whole being—gifts were lavished upon her both for herself and others. Thus she still teaches us what spiritual childhood is. What lessons of humility, confidence and generosity this “little doctor” gives us all! The more we study it, the more it seems that *Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux* sums up the teaching the world most needs; it is like a heaven-sent answer to the much debated question of the grace of God—the principle within us of all supernatural activity. The Church had already given this answer in her liturgy, so had St Paul and St Augustine, so had the Saviour himself: “Without me you can do nothing.”

P. DE PUNIET, O.S.B.

HER CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

IN a small pamphlet on St Teresa, written with much insight by a Carmelite Tertiary, we read: "The whole of little Teresa's mystical ascent lies between two very short phrases. Between the two is the unknown. The first is the small girl's *I think*. It is the awakening of a soul as yet wholly inexperienced, and beginning to perceive the gift of God. The second is the dying nun's answer to the infirmarian who questions her: "And what do you say to Jesus?" "I say nothing—I only love him!"*

Much has been written on the doings of the little saint who scatters roses, but we would wish to know more of her interior life and the principal stages of her spiritual ascent. So we are grateful to the author who has discreetly raised the veil which hides this noble Carmelite figure. Surely it is allowable to raise it yet further.†

In meditating on *Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux* in the light of St John of the Cross, it is easy to follow

* *La Bienheureuse petite Thérèse, sa mission providentielle*, by Fr. Louis de Ste-Thérèse, T.O.C.D. Desclée.

† This article had already been written several weeks before Père Gabriel de Ste-Marie-Madeleine brought out his excellent pamphlet, *Le message de la petite Thérèse*. It was a joy to find that our own ideas were so like to those of an author fully qualified to write of these delicate matters, as yet but little investigated.

St Teresa of the Child Jesus through the successive stages which, in the shadows of faith, led her so swiftly to the summit of the mystical life. It is important, for the glory of the saint, and the interest of souls drawn after her by the divine mercy in such great numbers, to make no mistake as to the issue of the sublime "little way" she was commissioned to preach to our age.

It is true we find in her life neither the visions nor revelations, ecstasies nor raptures, which often accompany the mystical life. But this fact constitutes no inferiority. We should rather see in this absence of sensible phenomena the proof of the purity of her contemplation, and the simplicity of this soul opening, as it were, naturally to the divine gift.* Let us remember the teaching of St John of the Cross in the fifteenth chapter of the second book of the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*:

" If our Lord were not obliged to deal with the soul in its own way, he would never communicate to it the abundance of his spirit by such narrow channels as these forms and shapes and details of knowledge, through which he gives sustenance to the soul crumb by crumb.†

" Hence he instructs (trains) the soul first of all by natural

* In *Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux* we find nothing extraordinary, strictly speaking, except the prophetic vision of her father's trial granted to little Teresa at the age of five or six, and the apparition of our Lady, who cured her instantaneously when ten years old of a strange malady in which there seemed to be diabolical influence.

† NOTE OF TRANSLATOR.—This first passage, from "If" to "crumb" is to be found later on in the same chapter, and is omitted by David Lewis, together with much else. The whole is in the fifteenth, not the seventeenth, chapter, as in Lewis's translation.

or supernatural forms and images, and methods of communication which come within the soul's perception, as well as by discursive thought, thus leading it on to this supreme spirit of God.

"This is why God gives it visions and forms and imaginations, and all the other matter of knowledge, whether of the senses, the intellect, or the spirit.

"Nor would he refuse to give it the very substance of the spirit from the very outset if only the two extremes—to wit, human and divine, sense and spirit—could, in the ordinary way, meet and be united in a single act, without the previous intervention of many other acts, needed merely to put the soul in the requisite dispositions."

These remarks of the great master of mystical theology throw light on St Teresa's interior life. Her preparation was swift, thanks to the intense passive purification which she suffered with such unusual courage and such perfect responsiveness. The girl of fifteen came to Carmel ready to receive the "hidden treasures" promised to the prophet, and the "*concealed riches of secret places*" (Isa. xlvi 3). In those "pages which will never be read upon earth" is hidden the secret of her sufferings and her life of union with the Beloved. Nevertheless, in the pages she has written with such candour we may make some discoveries. But first we must understand that, considering the nature of her mission, her manner of writing is far from being forcibly expressive or even hyperbolical like that of St John of the Cross; and to express the loftiest realities she uses the most ordinary, unpretentious, one might even say the most commonplace, terms. Let us not be deceived by appearances, but strive to fathom the depths of her thought.

"Thy love has gone before me, even from the days

of my childhood. It has grown with my growth, and now it is an abyss whose depths I cannot fathom."* An attentive study of her life will show that what she says of the love bestowed upon her may be rightly applied to the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which are inseparable from this love, and to the infused contemplation which they produce. We shall see how infused light and love were manifest in Teresa from the awakening of reason (and this awakening came very early), how they grew amid the passive purifications which were so liberally granted her, and which led her into that abyss of which she could not sound the depths. This abyss is transforming union :

" For once granted that God gives the soul the grace of uniting it to the most Holy Trinity, whereby the soul becomes god-like (*deiformis*) and God by participation, how should it be at all incredible that it (the soul) should also perform its functions of understanding, knowledge and love —or, rather, should have them performed in the Trinity together with the soul itself—like the Trinity?" (St John of the Cross, *Cant.*, stanza xxxix).†

I. CHILDHOOD—BEGINNING OF INFUSED CONTEMPLATION—PASSIVE PURIFICATION OF THE SENSES—FIRST GRACES OF UNION

" God, in his goodness, did me the favour of awakening my intelligence very early," declares

* *Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux*, chapter xi, p. 175.

† " Porque dado que Dios le haga merced de unirla en la Santisima Trinidad, en que el alma se hace Deiforme y Dios por participación, que increide cosa es que obre ella también su obra de entendimiento, noticia y amor, ó por mejor decir, la tenga obrada en la Trinidad juntamente con ella, como la misma Trinidad?"

St Teresa (chapter i). To this the first two chapters of "the story of the little white flower" bear witness. From the age of two or three, this child already kept herself almost habitually in the presence of God, and refused him no sacrifice.

"How happy I was at that age! I was beginning to enjoy life, and goodness itself seemed full of charms. Probably my character was the same as it is now,* for even then I had great self-command, and made a practice of never complaining when my things were taken from me; even if I was unjustly accused, I preferred to keep silence. There was no merit in this, for I did it naturally" (chapter i, p. 26).

Let us notice this "naturally." Everything is consciously done for God, since the small girl "puts her hand into her pocket time after time, to pull a bead along the string, whenever she makes a sacrifice," relates her mother. But so sweetly and easily is this done that we see clearly how already "the little rogue" is living under the habitual guidance of the Holy Ghost.

To this child of grace everything speaks of God. "All nature charmed me, and lifted up my soul to heaven" (chapter i, p. 26).

"Those were specially happy days for me when I went fishing with my dear 'King,' as I used to call my father. Sometimes I tried my hand with a small rod of my own, but generally I preferred to sit on the grass some distance

* The English translation is here rather misleading. The original is: "*Je me trouvais, il me semble, dans les mêmes dispositions qu'aujourd'hui.*" The plural, *dispositions*, seems better translated by the same word in English than by "character."

away. Then my reflections became really deep, and, without knowing what meditation meant, my soul was absorbed in prayer. Far-off sounds reached me, the murmuring of the wind, sometimes a few uncertain notes of music from a military band in the town a long way off; all this imparted a touch of melancholy to my thoughts. Earth seemed a place of exile, and I dreamed of heaven" (chapter ii, p. 32).

"When I was six or seven years old I saw the sea for the first time. The sight made a deep impression on me, and I could not take my eyes off it. Its majesty, and the roar of the waves, all spoke to my soul of the greatness and power of God. . . . That evening at the hour when the sun seems to sink into the vast ocean, leaving behind it a trail of glory, I sat with Pauline on a bare rock, and gazed for long on this golden furrow which she told me was an image of grace illuminating the way of faithful souls here below. Then I pictured my soul as a tiny barque, with a graceful white sail, in the midst of the furrow, and I resolved never to let it withdraw from the sight of Jesus, so that it might sail peacefully and quickly towards the Heavenly Shore" (chapter ii, p. 41).

Here is another detail:

"I remember that I used to look up at the stars with inexpressible delight. Orion's belt fascinated me especially, for I saw in it a likeness to the letter 'T.' 'Look, Papa,' I would cry, 'my name is written in heaven!' Then, not wishing to see this dull earth any longer, I asked him to lead me, and with my head thrown back, I gazed unweariedly at the starry skies" (chapter ii, p. 37).

The incident is childish, but compare it with this confidence of a later date:

"*From the time of my childhood I felt that one day I should be set free from this land of darkness. I believed it, not only because I had been told so by others, but my heart's most secret and deepest longings assured me that there was in store for me another and more beautiful country—an*

abiding dwelling-place. I was like Christopher Columbus, whose genius anticipated the discovery of the New World" (chapter ix, p. 140).

The childish account of the name written in heaven thus takes on a deep significance. There was already a mystical intuition in the soul of this five-year-old child. God was then revealing himself to her through the things of sense; it was not long before he called her into solitude to speak to her heart.

"A mistress at the Abbey asked me once what I did on holidays when I stayed at home. I answered timidly: 'I often hide myself in a corner of my room where I can shut myself in with the bed curtains, and then I think.' 'But what do you think about?' said the good nun, laughing. 'I think about the good God, about the shortness of life, and about eternity: in a word, *I think.*' . . . Now, I know that I was praying, while my divine master gently instructed me" (chapter iv, p. 57).

It was during one of these meditations that she received a grace which she considered one of the greatest of her life, for she adds: "At that age I was not favoured with lights from heaven as I am now."

"Our Lord made me understand that the only true glory is that which lasts for ever; and that to attain it there is no necessity to do brilliant deeds, but rather to hide from the eyes of others, and even from oneself, so that 'the left hand knows not what the right hand does.' Then as I reflected that I was born for great things, and sought the means to attain them, it was made known to me interiorly that my personal glory would never reveal itself before the eyes of men, but that it would consist in becoming a Saint" (chapter iv, p. 55).

But these graces had already been purchased by suffering. "I was to be the spouse of our Lord at such an early age that it was necessary I should suffer from my childhood" (chapter i, p. 27). At four and a half she lost her mother, and this loss was so keenly felt that it marked the beginning of the second period of her life, "*the most sorrowful*," she says, "especially after Pauline, my second mother, entered the Carmel; and it lasted from the time I was four years old until I was fourteen, when I recovered much of my childish gaiety, even though I understood more fully the serious side of life" (chapter ii, p. 30).

This time, to tell the truth, seems to have been a period of passive purification of the senses, and even of the spirit. We need not be surprised that this came so early in life. It is no more extraordinary to see the child suffering under the action of God than to see her living almost habitually in his presence from the age of three.

"After my mother's death my naturally happy disposition completely changed. Instead of being lively and demonstrative as I had been, I became timid, shy, and extremely sensitive; a look was enough to make me burst into tears. I could not bear to be noticed or to meet strangers, and I was only at ease in my own family circle" (chapter ii, p. 30).

Her sister Pauline filled the office of second mother with rare wisdom and great tenderness. Her entrance into Carmel was a still sharper trial for Teresa (*cf.* chapter iii, pp. 44-47). "I soon became seriously ill," she says. This mysterious illness in many ways

resembled diabolical molestations: several times she was violently thrown out of bed on to the floor. It seems probable that this was one of those strange maladies described by St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross in explanation of the passive purification of the spirit. The morbid character of these trials does not hinder their purifying effect, as St John of the Cross remarks. This is the account given us by St Teresa of the Child Jesus:

“I do not know how to describe this extraordinary illness. I said things which I had never thought of; I acted as though I were forced to act in spite of myself; I seemed nearly always to be delirious; and yet I feel certain that I was never for a minute deprived of my reason. . . . And what fears the devil inspired! . . .” (chapter iii, pp. 48-49).

The account of her miraculous cure by our Lady should be read. In it St Teresa tells us (which is more to our purpose) how the questions put to her about the apparition changed this heavenly favour into an interior suffering, a fresh purification: “. . . My God, thou alone knowest all that I suffered” (chapter iii, pp. 51, 52, 53).

This illness, which took place when she was ten, was, in God’s loving plan, the final preparation for her first Communion. For four years from the time of her sister Céline’s, which was like a foretaste of her own, Teresa had had such an intense longing for the Bread of Life that her desires and the prolonged waiting were for her soul another suffering. She could say with the Psalmist: “*As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after thee, O God. My soul hath thirsted after the living*

God" (Ps. xli 1). And with the Bride of the Canticle: "*I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I languish with love*" (Cant. v 8). When she saw her sisters approach the altar, she could not restrain her tears. One day she whispered to her eldest sister: "Suppose I were to follow you, Marie! Oh, let me; nobody would see me." This is how our Lord responded to this long and loving expectation:

"How sweet was the first embrace of Jesus! It was indeed an embrace of love. I felt that I was loved, and I said: 'I love thee, and I give myself to thee for ever.' Jesus asked nothing of me, and claimed no sacrifice; for a long time he and little Thérèse had known and understood one another. That day our meeting was more than simple recognition, it was perfect union. We were no longer two. Thérèse had disappeared like a drop of water lost in the immensity of the ocean; Jesus alone remained—he was the Master, the King! Had not Thérèse asked him to take away her liberty which frightened her? She felt herself so weak and frail that she wished for ever to be united to the Divine Strength. And then my joy became so intense, so deep, that it could not be restrained; tears of happiness welled up and overflowed" (chapter iv, p. 59).

Have we not here the essence of the prayer of union described by St Teresa of Avila in the sixteenth chapter of her *Life*, and in the *fifth mansion* of the *Interior Castle*, chapter i? The child had that certainty of having been united with our Lord, which, as the saint says, characterizes the prayer of union. "I kept repeating the words of St Paul: '*I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me.*' St Teresa is speaking here of her second Communion, when her "tears flowed with inexpressible sweetness."

We recognize also the fruits of this prayer of union enumerated by St Teresa of Avila, in another of the child's thanksgivings :

" My heart became inflamed with an ardent desire for suffering, and I felt convinced that many crosses were in store for me. Then my soul was flooded with such consolation as I have never since experienced. Suffering became attractive. . . . During my thanksgiving after Holy Communion I often repeated this passage from the *Imitation of Christ*: 'O my God, who art unspeakable sweetness, turn for me into bitterness all the consolations of earth.' These words *rose to my lips quite naturally*; I said them like a child who, without well understanding, repeats what a friend may suggest" (p. 61).

The words I have italicized clearly denote passive, infused prayer. Personally I consider that the mystical prayer of union was, beyond a doubt, already granted to the small girl of eleven.

An incident in *l'Esprit de la Bienheureuse* proves, moreover, that she was supernaturally enlightened by the gift of understanding in an already eminent degree (*cf. Souvenirs inédits*, p. 72). "During her retreat before Confirmation, when she was explaining to her youngest sister how the Holy Ghost takes possession of the soul by Confirmation, there was something so unearthly in her words, and her face became suddenly so radiant, that Céline lowered her eyes and withdrew, impressed with a sense of the supernatural which she never forgot." Teresa's Confirmation day was one of great graces received in deep peace.

" I did not feel the mighty wind of the first Pentecost, but rather the gentle breeze which the prophet Elias heard on

Mount Horeb. On that day I received the gift of *fortitude* in suffering—a gift I needed sorely, for the martyrdom of my soul was soon to begin" (p. 62).

It is not surprising to see darkness and anguish follow this period of light and consolation. St John of the Cross has remarked that these alternations are characteristic of the spiritual life, especially in its higher degrees. "It was during my retreat before my second Communion that I was attacked by the terrible disease of scruples. One must have passed through this martyrdom to understand it. It would be quite impossible for me to tell you what I suffered for nearly two years" (p. 65). The departure of her sister Marie, "the only support of her soul," brought her trial to a climax.

"As soon as I knew of her decision, I made up my mind to take no further pleasure in anything here below. I could not tell you how many tears I shed. . . . After Marie entered the Carmel, and I no longer had her to listen to my scruples, I turned towards heaven and confided them to the four little angels who had already gone before me, for I thought that these innocent souls, who had never known sorrow or fear, ought to have pity on their poor, little, suffering sister. . . . The answer was not long in coming; soon my soul was flooded with the sweetest peace. I knew that I was loved, not only on earth, but also in heaven" (pp. 68-70).

Once again the smile of heaven had dispelled the soul's darkness. The purification went on without respite in the child's sensitive heart. All the faculties must be purified in souls called to divine union, but most of all the dominant faculty which is to charac-

terize the soul's sanctity. Love being the special characteristic of St Teresa ("my vocation is love"), her heart had to be perfectly purified. The sacrifice, first of her mother, then of her two elder sisters, had already been asked of her. Thus did suffering come to her from that happy home where all her affections centred. Outside the family circle little Teresa's heart could never expand. At school her poor little heart suffered much from a classmate four years older than herself and jealous of her success. Her mistresses were very kind, but did not suspect the treasure entrusted to them. Teresa confesses ingenuously in the fourth chapter of her *Life* that she tried to imitate the girls who were especially attracted to one or other of the mistresses, but that she never succeeded. "I am most thankful to our Lord," she adds, "that he let me find only bitterness in earthly friendships. With a heart like mine, I should have been taken captive and had my wings clipped, and how then should I have been able to '*fly away and be at rest*'?" (p. 63).

Under these successive trials Teresa's sensitiveness had developed abnormally.

"In fact, I made troubles out of everything. Now things are quite different. God in his goodness has given me grace not to be cast down by any passing difficulty. When I think of what I used to be, my heart overflows with gratitude. The graces I have received have changed me so completely that I am scarcely the same person. . . . If by accident I offended anyone, instead of taking it in the right way, I fretted till I made myself ill . . . [p. 69]. . . . A miracle on a small scale was needed to give me strength of character all at once, and God worked this long-desired

miracle on Christmas Day, 1886. On that blessed night the sweet Infant Jesus, scarce an hour old, filled the darkness of my soul with floods of light. By becoming weak and little for love of me, he made me strong and brave; he put his own weapons into my hands, so that I went from victory to victory, beginning, if I may say so, '*to run as a giant.*' The fountain of my tears was dried up, and from that time they flowed neither easily nor often" (chapter v, p. 71).

II. THE SPIRITUAL ESPOUSALS AND THE NIGHT OF THE SPIRIT

St Teresa always speaks of this grace of Christmas, 1886, as her conversion. She does not tell us what passed between Jesus and herself that Christmas night. This was one of those mystical graces which transform the soul in a few moments, and was no doubt so secret, so substantial, that she could not analyze it. She merely describes its effects.

"On this night of grace, the third period of my life began—the most beautiful of all, the one most filled with heavenly favours. In an instant our Lord, satisfied with my good will, accomplished the work I had not been able to do during all these years. Like the Apostle, I could say: '*Master, we have laboured all night, and have taken nothing.*' More merciful to me even than to his beloved Disciples, our Lord himself took the net, cast it, and drew it out full of fishes. He made me a fisher of men. Love and a spirit of self-forgetfulness took possession of me, and from that time I was perfectly happy" (chapter v, p. 72).

I believe this period to have been that of the spiritual espousals, to use the terms of her father,

St John of the Cross, and her mother, St Teresa of Avila, St Teresa, in her autobiography, applies to herself the words of Ezechiel xvi 8: "*Behold thy time was the time of lovers . . . and I entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God. And thou becamest mine.*" She gives us a glimpse of what her contemplation then was, when she comments on the twenty-fifth stanza in the *Spiritual Canticle* of St John of the Cross: "Treading within thy foot-steps. . . ." "Sometimes," she says, "I had veritable transports. . . ." It was then also that a burning zeal for the salvation of souls was kindled within her (*cf. pp. 72-74*).

These are the first-fruits, the sweet interchange of love; but the time of the espousals is also a time of trial; there are absences and searches after the Beloved. The floods of love and light poured into the child's heart prepared her for complete severance from the world. She had resolved to enter Carmel at the very hour when, the year before, she had received her grace of conversion. But obstacles arose where she least expected them, and she whom the Bridegroom was drawing so powerfully to solitude found the waiting painful.

"' The Divine Call became so insistent,' she says, ' that had it been necessary for me to go through fire I would have thrown myself into it to follow my Divine Master . . . '

"' In that happy night,
In secret, seen of none,
Seeing nought myself,
Without other light or guide
Save that which in my heart was burning.

“ ‘ That light guided me .
More surely than the noonday sun
To the place where he was waiting for me,
Whom I knew well,
And where none appeared.’ ”*

And a great peace filled her soul, tried by all these delays. For three days, however, even the interior light was eclipsed.

“ Never had I understood so well the bitter grief of our Lady and St Joseph when they were searching the streets of Jerusalem for the divine Child. I seemed to be in a frightful desert . . . it was night, dark night, utter desolation, death! Like my divine Master in the Agony in the Garden, I felt that I was alone, and found no comfort on earth or in heaven ” (chapter v, p. 81).

But with the hope of reaching the goal light returned. The trial had been short, for God, as St John of the Cross says, never sends useless sufferings. The trial ceases when it has attained its end. Jesus had doubtless accepted the act of confidence for which he had been waiting, and made haste to return.

“ Our Lord, whose Heart is always watching, taught me that he grants miracles to those whose faith is small as a grain of mustard seed, in the hope of strengthening this slender faith; whilst for his intimate friends, for his mother, he did not work miracles till he had proved their faith. . . . In this way did my Beloved act with his little Thérèse; after he had tried her for a long time he granted all her desires ” (chapter vi, p. 104).

Once she was at Carmel, let us see how God fulfilled all Teresa’s desires.

* St John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the Soul*.

“ ‘ Suffering opened her arms to me from the first, and I took her to my heart . . . ’ [p. 108]. In the first place, my soul had for its daily food the bread of spiritual dryness ” (p. 107).

She could say with the Spouse in the Canticle of St John of the Cross: “ Where hast thou hidden thyself . . . O my Beloved ? ” But who will answer her ? Her Mother Prioress ?

“ Then, too, dear Mother, our Lord allowed you, unconsciously, to treat me very severely. You found fault with me whenever you met me. I remember once I had left a cobweb in the cloister, and you said to me before the whole community : ‘ It is easy to see that our cloisters are swept by a child of fifteen. It is disgraceful ! Go and sweep away that cobweb, and be more careful in future.’ On the rare occasions when I spent an hour with you for spiritual direction, you seemed to be scolding me nearly all the time, and what pained me most of all was that I did not see how to correct my faults ” (chapter vii, p. 107).

The Novice Mistress ?

“ Our Mistress was a true saint, the perfect type of the first Carmelites. . . . I loved and appreciated her, and yet my soul did not expand. I could not explain myself, words failed me, and so the time of spiritual direction became a veritable martyrdom ” (p. 109).

Her confessor ? She confided to him her great desires of loving our Lord : he saw in this boundless confidence only pride and presumption. The religious who understood the little postulant, and who declared that she had never lost her baptismal innocence, had hardly undertaken her direction when he was sent to Canada (cf. pp. 109-110).

Could she go to her sisters, who had taken her

mother's place, and whom she had been so glad to find again at Carmel? But there is the rule of silence, and she did not ask for exemptions. "O my little Mother," she confessed later, "how I suffered! I could not open my heart to you, and I thought you no longer knew me."

The purification of the heart still continued,* together with that of the spirit. For can a soul desiring to be an open book for her Superiors, and to receive their words as those of our Lord himself, have a deeper suffering than to feel that she is not understood, and to receive direction which seems to contradict the aspirations inspired by the Holy Ghost in her inmost heart?

"For five years this way was mine, but I alone knew it; this was precisely the flower I wished to offer to Jesus, a hidden flower which keeps its perfume only for heaven" (p. 108).

Why should she ask the daughters of Jerusalem where the Beloved was feeding his flocks, since she already knew—this Carmelite of fifteen—that she was herself the place of his retreat, and that the kingdom of God is within us? She was soon to read this, to her great consolation, in the *Canticle* of St John of the Cross; but she had already learnt it from her divine Bridegroom: "What more canst thou desire, what more canst thou seek outside thyself, seeing that within thee thou hast thy riches, thy delight, thy satisfaction, thy fulness and thy kingdom; that

* To this must be added the heartrending malady of her father and the "bitter chalices" which came to her on account of her sisters.

is, thy Beloved, whom thou desirest and seekest? Rejoice, then, and be glad in him with interior recollection, seeing that thou hast him so near. Then love him here, then desire him here, then adore him here, and go not to seek him out of thyself, for that will be but distraction and weariness, and thou shalt not find him; because there is no fruition of him more certain, more ready, or more intimate than that which is within thee. One difficulty alone remains: though he is within thee, yet he is hidden. . . . So thou, if thou wilt find him, must forget all that is thine, withdraw from all created things, and hide thyself in the secret retreat of the spirit, shutting the door upon thyself—that is, denying thy will in all things—and praying to thy Father in secret. Then thou, being hidden with him, wilt be conscious of his presence in secret, and wilt love him, possess him in secret, and delight in him in secret, in a way that no tongue nor understanding can express or arrive at. . . . Consider also that he bids thee, by the mouth of Isaias, to come to his secret hiding-place, saying, 'Go . . . enter into thy chambers, shut the doors upon thee'; that is, all thy faculties, so that no created thing shall enter: 'be hid a little for a moment'—that is, for the moment of this mortal life; for if now, during this life which is short, thou wilt 'with all watchfulness keep thy heart,' as the wise man saith, God will most assuredly give thee, as he hath promised by the prophet Isaias, 'hidden treasures, and will disclose to thee the substance and mysteries of secrets.' The substance of these secrets is God himself, for he is the substance of Faith,

and the object of it, and Faith is the secret and the mystery. And when that which Faith conceals shall be revealed and made manifest, that is the perfection of God, as St Paul says (1 Cor. xiii 10), then the substance and mysteries of the secrets shall be revealed to the soul" (*Spiritual Canticle*, stanza i). This passage from St John of the Cross is a perfect description of St Teresa's religious life, her trend of mind, and her way of prayer.

During her postulancy the depth of the riches to be found in devotion to the Holy Face was revealed to her.

"I understood better than ever in what true glory consists. He whose 'Kingdom is not of this world' taught me that the only royalty to be coveted lies in being 'unknown and esteemed as naught,' and in the joy of self-abasement" (p. 110).

She wrote on a paper which she carried on her heart while she made her vows :

"May I never seek or find aught but thee alone! May all creatures be nothing to me and I nothing to them! May no earthly thing disturb my peace!" (p. 120).

I do not know whether any soul ever desired more passionately to be forgotten. See her letter to Mother Agnes :

"I want nothing but to be forgotten; not contempt, not insults, that would be too great an honour for the 'grain of sand.' . . . I long to be unknown to every one of God's creatures! I have never desired glory amongst men, and if their contempt used to attract my heart, I have realized that even this is too glorious for me, and I thirst to be forgotten" (*Letters*, p. 288).

In this inviolate solitude she sought not even the caresses of the divine Bridegroom. Her unshaken faith so reassured her of the presence of the Guest within, that even when she did not feel him, when he seemed to be asleep, she doubted not that he was still there. In her naïve way she tells us that she took care "not to wake him." What purity of love there is in this childish expression which she repeats so often.

" ' Ah, do not fear, Lord, that I shall wake thee : I await in peace the Kingdom of Heaven . . . it is so sweet to serve God in *darkness* and trial ; we have only this life in which to live by faith.' "

I will give in full her letter to Mother Agnes during her retreat before profession, in which she describes her prayer. This most important document is one in which we can best discern in St Teresa the obscure contemplation of St John of the Cross.

" Your little hermit must give you an account of her journey. Before starting my Beloved asked me in what land I wished to travel and what road I wished to take. I told him that I had only one desire—that of reaching the *summit of the Mountain of Love*.

" Thereupon roads innumerable spread before my gaze, but so many of these were perfect that I felt incapable of choosing any of my own free will. Then I said to my divine Guide : ' Thou knowest where lieth the goal of my desire, and for whose sake I would climb the *Mountain*. Thou knowest who possesses the love of my heart. For him only I set out on this journey ; lead me therefore by the paths of his choosing : my joy shall be full if only he is pleased.

" And our Lord took me by the hand and led me through an underground passage where it is neither hot nor cold, where the sun shines not, and where neither wind nor rain

can enter—a place where I see nothing but a half-veiled light, the light that gleams from the downcast Eyes of the Face of Jesus.

“ My Spouse speaks not a word, and I say nothing save that I love him more than myself; and in the depths of my heart I know this is true, for I am more his than mine. I cannot see that we are advancing towards our journey’s goal since we travel by a subterranean way; and yet, without knowing how, it seems to me that we are nearing the summit of the Mountain.

“ I give thanks to Jesus for making me walk in darkness, and in this darkness I enjoy profound peace. Willingly do I consent to remain through all my religious life in this gloomy passage into which he has led me. I desire only that my darkness may obtain light for sinners. I am content, nay, full of joy, to be without all consolation. I should be ashamed if my love were like that of those earthly brides who are ever looking for gifts from their bridegrooms, or seeking to catch the loving smile which fills them with delight.

“ Thérèse, the little Spouse of Jesus, loves him for himself; she only looks on the face of her Beloved to catch a glimpse of the tears which delight her with their secret charm. She longs to wipe away those tears, or to gather them up like priceless diamonds with which to adorn her bridal dress. *Jesus! . . . Oh! I would so love him! Love him as he has never yet been loved! . . .*

“ At all costs I must win the palm of St Agnes; if it cannot be mine through blood, I must win it by Love” (*Letter to Mother Agnes*, p. 286).

It seems strange that such a loving soul should so readily consent to be deprived of all sensible consolation. What is the explanation? “ My little way,” she said again, “ is not to desire to see anything. . . . No, I do not wish to see the good God on earth, and yet I love him.” It was because the gift of understanding had taught her the excellence

of naked faith. Already the postulant had written during her retreat before clothing: "Jesus prefers to leave me in darkness, rather than afford me a false glimmer which would not be himself." At the end of her life she said: "Fancies like those do not help me, and my soul can only feed upon truth." She had understood that feelings of consolation, a thought proportioned to our limited minds, cannot be the very Being of God, that "faith is the sole proximate and proportionate means of the soul's union with God," as St John of the Cross says (*Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book II, chapter ix). Offered her choice of some toys as a tiny child, "I choose everything," she said. And, "Later on," she tells us, recalling the incident, "when the way of perfection was opened out before me . . . then also . . . I cried out: 'My God, I choose everything; I will not be a saint by halves. . . . I choose all that thou willest'" (chapter i, p. 25). The contemplative was once more to choose everything. She must have the whole of her God: and only naked faith can give him to her. Therefore she will desire nothing that is within reach of her senses and faculties. By the light given her, she grasped from the first, as though instinctively, the doctrine of St John of the Cross, who sees in mystical contemplation the fulness of the life of faith. "Never seek to satisfy thyself with what thou comprehendest of God, but rather with what thou comprehendest not; and never rest on the love of, and delight in, that which thou canst understand and feel, but rather on that which is beyond thy under-

standing and feeling. . . . Be not thou like many unwise, who, with low views of God, think that when they cannot comprehend him, or be conscious of his presence, that he is farther away and more hidden, when the contrary is rather true—namely, that he is nearer to them when they are least distinctly aware of it; as the prophet David saith, '*He put darkness his covert.*' Thus, when thou art near unto him, the very infirmity of thy vision makes the darkness palpable . . ." (*Spiritual Canticle*, stanza i). And again: "All apprehension and knowledge of supernatural things cannot help us to love God so much as the least act of living faith and hope made in detachment from all things" (*Maxims*, 24).

This naked faith is so called because it is stripped of sentient sweetness, of every image and distinct intelligible form which might stay its flight to the primal truth, of all those accessory phenomena which might give the enemy the advantage. For St Teresa, as for St John of the Cross and all the mystics, this faith was accompanied, needless to say, by the gifts of Wisdom and Understanding.* Since this faith is supernatural in essence and object, and, despite its obscurity, infinitely surpasses the most brilliant natural intuitions, and even the most sublime natural knowledge of the highest angel, it is not surprising that, when unhindered, it should

* In his sermons, Tauler often speaks of pure, naked faith, freed from images and reasoned knowledge. He declares it to be much superior to consolations and revelations. This naked faith is certainly accompanied by the gifts of Wisdom and Understanding in an eminent degree. And it is this faith which we must see in St Teresa's aridity, "the sleep of the little Jesus," as she calls it in her childish fashion.

raise a soul in a short time to the highest contemplation.*

We may judge the value of Teresa's prayer of "great aridity" by its fruits:

"At the beginning of my spiritual life, about the age of fourteen, I used to ask myself how, in days to come, I should more clearly understand the true meaning of perfection. I imagined I then understood it completely, but I soon came to realize that the more one advances along this path the farther one seems from the goal, and now I am resigned to be always imperfect" (chapter vii, p. 116).

"It may be that some day my present state will appear to me full of defects, but nothing now surprises me, and I do not even distress myself because I am so weak. On the contrary, I glory therein, and expect each day to find fresh imperfections" (chapter ix, p. 153).

We see the growth in knowledge of God and self since those luminous hours of prayer on the house-top at Les Buissonets.† In this prayer of suffering the Holy Ghost taught Teresa the "little way" which was to immortalize her memory. Before the holiness of God and her native helplessness, she understood that she could reach God only by God himself, and surrendered herself to blind hope.

In this obscure contemplation, she was secretly

* Cf. R. Garrigou-Lagrange, *Perfection chrétienne et Contemplation*, pp. 63-88, 174, 390.

† A lamp shines in darkness; in the sunlight it loses all its brilliance. So our actions appear to us good; but when we come to know however little of the divine realities, we see the nothingness of our works. . . . In the light of God the soul sees how far it is from the divine holiness. The more the saints progress in contemplation, the more conscious they are of their nothingness." —St Gregory the Great, *P.L.*, vol. lxxvi, col. 87.

taught all she had need to know for her own guidance and that of the souls entrusted to her.

"Apparently barren as was my [profession] retreat—and those which followed have been no less so—I unconsciously received many interior lights on the best means of pleasing God and practising virtue. I have often observed that our Lord will not give me any store of provisions, but nourishes me each moment with food that is ever new; I find it within me without knowing how it has come there. I simply believe that it is Jesus himself hidden in my poor heart, who is secretly at work inspiring me with what he wishes me to do as each occasion arises" (chapter viii, pp. 118-119).

Mark the expression: *I find it within me without knowing how it has come there.* It is characteristic. We seem to hear St Teresa of Avila speaking of the prayer of union (*Fifth Mansion*).

"In my helplessness the Holy Scriptures and the *Imitation* are of the greatest assistance; in them I find a hidden manna, genuine and pure. But it is from the Gospels that I find most help in the time of prayer; from them I draw all that I need for my poor soul. I am always discovering in them new lights and hidden mysterious meanings. I know and I have experienced that '*the Kingdom of God is within us.*' Our Lord has no need of books or teachers to instruct our souls. He, the Teacher of teachers, instructs us without any noise of words. I have never heard him speak, yet I know that he is within me. He is there, always guiding and inspiring me; and just when I need them, lights, hitherto unseen, break in. This is not as a rule during my prayers, but in the midst of my daily duties" (p. 131).

"*The Teacher of teachers instructs us without any noise of words.*" This is indeed infused contemplation, the fruit of the gifts of Wisdom and Understanding. "*I know and I have experienced,*

that the Kingdom of God is within us." Again she said: "Do not think that I am filled with consolation. Oh no. My consolation is to have none on earth. Without letting himself be seen, or his voice heard, Jesus teaches me in secret."

This contemplation continued while she worked. "On one occasion a novice, entering her cell, was struck by the heavenly expression of her countenance. She was sewing industriously, and yet seemed lost in deep contemplation. 'What are you thinking of?' the young Sister asked. 'I am meditating on the 'Our Father,'" Teresa answered. 'It is so sweet to call God, "Our Father!"' . . . and tears glistened in her eyes. She was contemplating God, her Father, the divine Paternity. It was under this aspect that God manifested himself to her; her 'little way' bears this stamp, imprinted by contemplation. She sang: 'I call him my Father; to be his child is my heaven.'"

This obscure, secret contemplation brought with it peace. If I have dwelt upon the passive "nights" through which she passed, it is in obedience to St Teresa herself, who asked that her many sufferings should be made known after her death: "My soul has been matured in the crucible of interior and exterior trials." But God forbid that I should cast a shade over the radiant figure of the lovable little saint. This shadow should rather bring into relief the halo of holy joy which surrounded her even on earth. Peace and joy so fill her autobiography that the superficial reader usually only catches this joyous, childlike note, and perhaps does not remark

that the note is never so vibrant as when suffering is keenest. When Teresa relates the difficulties that beset her way to Carmel, she insists on the peace which was always in the depths of her soul. Peace again awaited her on the threshold of the austere cloister.

“ At last my desires were realized, and I cannot describe the deep, sweet peace which filled my soul. This peace has remained with me during the eight and a half years of my life here, and has never left me even amid the greatest trials ” (chapter vii, p. 106).

At the time of her father’s terrible malady during her novitiate peace abounded.

“ Though my suffering seemed to have reached its height, yet my attraction thereto did not grow less, and soon my soul shared in the trials my heart had to bear. My spiritual aridity increased, and I found no comfort either in heaven or on earth; yet, amid these waters of tribulation that I had so thirsted for, I was the happiest of mortals ” (chapter vii, p. 115).

This peace grew continually; as will be seen presently, it attained its fulness in the martyrdom she suffered during the last eighteen months of her life: “ *Thou hast given me, O Lord, delight in all thou dost.* ” This peace and joy, characteristic of St Teresa’s interior life, almost veil the passive purifications through which she passed. One day a Sister remarked: “ It is said that you have never suffered much.” . . . “ To others,” she answered, “ my life has been all rose colour. They have thought that I continually drank of a most delicious wine; yet to me it has been full of bitterness. I say bitterness,

and yet my life has not been a bitter one, for I have learned to find my joy and sweetness in all that is bitter" (*Epilogue*, p. 203).

III. TRANSFORMING UNION AND THE PURIFICATION OF LOVE

It remains to show how St Teresa's mystical contemplation, dry and obscure, led her swiftly to the purification of love, and the transforming union described by St Teresa of Avila in the Seventh Mansion.

In her autobiography, Teresa nearly always speaks of her prayer during her novitiate as being dry and obscure. However, a little before her death she acknowledged that she had experienced several transports of love at this time—one in particular, when she was for a whole week far removed from this world: "I cannot describe it, for it seemed as though I were acting with a body not my own; there was, as it were, a veil thrown over all earthly things."*

Does this imply any contradiction? Certainly not. St John of the Cross fully explains this fact when speaking of spiritual visions of created things. "Though it be true that the recollection of them excites the soul to a certain love of God, and to contemplation, yet pure faith and detachment in darkness excites it much more, without the soul's knowing how or whence it comes. And so it will

* It seems astounding, after such an avowal, that any difficulty should be found in admitting St Teresa to have been favoured with mystical prayer except perhaps towards the end of her life.

sometimes happen that the soul is set on fire with the urgings of the purest love of God, without knowing whence they come or on what foundations they rest. In short, as faith is rooted more and more into the soul by means of this emptiness and darkness, in detachment from all things, in poverty of spirit—these are different expressions of one and the same thing—so also the charity of God is simultaneously the more deeply rooted in the soul. And therefore the more the soul strives to become blind, and annihilated as to all interior and exterior things, the more it will be filled with Faith, and, consequently, with Love and Hope. But this love at times is neither comprehended nor felt, because it does not establish itself in the senses with tenderness, but in the soul with fortitude, with greater courage and resolution than before . . .” (*Ascent of Mount Carmel*, Book II, chapter xxiv, p. 202).

St John of the Cross develops this teaching still more explicitly in the *Living Flame of Love*, and proves that in the supernatural order it is possible to love without distinct knowledge. “Take care, therefore, to empty the will and detach it from all its inclinations, for if it is not going backwards, searching after sweetness and comfort, even though it have none in God distinctly felt, it is really advancing upwards above all such things to God, seeing that it is without any particular pleasure. And though the penitent have no particular comfort in God distinctly apprehended, though he does not make distinct acts of love, he does find more comfort in him in that general secret and dim infusion than if

he were under the influence of distinct acts of knowledge, because the soul sees clearly then that not one of them can furnish so much comfort and delight as this calm and lonely infusion" (stanza iii, pp. 91-92).

A few lines before, he says: "For as God is light and love in this delicate communication, he informs equally the understanding and the will, though at times his presence is felt more in one than in the other. At one time the understanding is more filled with knowledge than the will with love, and at another, love is deeper than knowledge." This was the case with little Teresa: it was given her to penetrate the mysterious depths of love. We will not attempt to follow her into those depths. I will only mention the offering* she made to "Merciful Love" two years before her death, and the mystical grace which followed it; for they seem to mark the beginning of St Teresa's unitive life. This last part of the contemplative life now remains to be studied.

* * * * *

We are rising higher and higher into the regions of pure faith. But God has been pleased to give us

* The very formula of her offering should be noted attentively. The words are pregnant with meaning, and betray, unknown to the humble little Sister, the high perfection which she had already attained. To "live by love," she offered herself as a *victim* to love. To make her life an *act* of unceasing love, she asked to be continually *consumed*. By being thus passive the soul attains its highest degree of activity. She counted on this passive martyrdom of love to prepare her to appear in God's presence, and to take her flight without delay into the eternal embrace of beatific love. In the formula of this offering, St Teresa shows a very deep understanding of the mystical state, and a great experience of passive contemplation.

a sign of the interchange of love into which he had entered with his little child.

“A few days after the oblation of myself to God’s merciful love, I was in the choir, beginning the Way of the Cross, when I felt myself suddenly wounded by a dart of fire so ardent that I thought I should die. I do not know how to explain this transport; there is no comparison to describe the intensity of that flame. It seemed as though an invisible force plunged me wholly into fire. . . . But, oh! what fire! what sweetness! . . . One second more and my soul must have been set free. Alas! I found myself again on earth, and *dryness at once returned to my heart*” (*Epilogue*, p. 195).

There seems nothing rash in believing this grace—certainly of the mystical order—to be the wound of love spoken of by St Teresa of Avila (*Life*, chapter xxix) and St John of the Cross (*Living Flame*, stanza i) without its miraculous phenomena. In little Teresa we have always the normal development of sanctifying grace, without anything extraordinary. Her life after this grace leaves no doubt as to its nature and sublimity. She thus speaks of it in her autobiography :

“O my God! must thy Love which is disdained lie hidden in thy Heart? Methinks, if thou shouldst find souls offering themselves as victims of holocaust to thy Love, thou wouldst consume them rapidly; thou wouldst be well pleased to suffer the flames of infinite tenderness to escape that are imprisoned in thy Heart. If thy Justice—which is of earth—must needs be satisfied, how much more must thy Merciful Love desire to inflame souls, since ‘*Thy mercy reacheth even to the heavens?*’ O Jesus! let me be that happy victim—consume thy holocaust with the Fire of divine Love!

“Dear Mother, you know the love, or rather the oceans of grace which flooded my soul immediately after I made

that *Act of Oblation* on June 9, 1895. From that day I have been penetrated and surrounded with love. Every moment this Merciful Love renews me and purifies me, leaving in my soul no trace of sin. I cannot fear Purgatory; I know I do not merit to enter, even, into that place of expiation with the Holy Souls, but I also know that the fire of Love is more sanctifying than the fire of Purgatory. I know that Jesus could not wish useless suffering for us, and he would not inspire me with the desires I feel, were he not willing to fulfil them" (chapter viii, p. 133).

Penetrating as far as we may into such secrets, we must recognize here the very essence of transforming union. Could Teresa have been more explicit without using terms consecrated by mystical writers, and which, writing as a child, she prefers to ignore? She had reached the top of the "secret ladder" spoken of by St John of the Cross in *The Dark Night of the Soul*, Book II, chapters xvii-xx. "On the ninth step the soul is on fire sweetly. This step is that of the perfect who burn away sweetly in God, for this sweet and delicious burning is the work of the Holy Ghost because of the union of the soul with God. . . . The blessings and the riches of God which the soul now enjoys cannot be described. . . . I shall now say no more of this step, except that it is immediately followed by the tenth and the last, which does not belong to this life" (*The Dark Night of the Soul*, Book II, chapter xx).

What then did little Teresa desire? Let us once more read the words of her oblation:

"In my heart I feel boundless desires, and I confidently beseech thee to take possession of my soul. . . . I implore thee to take from me all liberty to sin. If through weak-

ness I should chance to fall, may a glance from thine Eyes straightway cleanse my soul, and consume all my imperfections—as fire transforms all things into itself. . . . May this martyrdom, after having prepared me to appear in thy Presence, free me from this life at the last, and may my soul take its flight, without delay, into the eternal embrace of thy Merciful Love! I desire that Jesus may take possession of my faculties so that my actions may no longer be merely human, but divine actions directed by the Spirit of Love."

But this is mystical union, the reign of the seven-fold gifts; it is transforming union. And she did not regard it as a special privilege of love which had been granted her.

"How can you ask me if it be possible to love God as I love him? . . . Dear Sister, do you not understand that to love Jesus and to be his victim of Love, the more weak and wretched we are the better material do we make for this *consuming and transfiguring Love*."

She continually encouraged those with whom she had intercourse in the holy ambition of going straight to heaven. "How could he cleanse in the flames of Purgatory souls consumed with the fire of divine love?" she wrote to a missionary.

But were little Teresa's hopes fulfilled? Did she attain these summits of love?

"If I reach not those heights to which my soul aspires, this very martyrdom, this foolishness, will have been sweeter to me than eternal bliss will be," she wrote with holy daring. Her heavenly Father, who made her desire what he willed to give her, who took pleasure in satisfying her most childish desires, could not disappoint this hope. But this answer *a priori* is not sufficient. Let us look at Teresa's works.

Her sisters attest that after this wound of love she acquired a remarkable mastery over her actions, and all virtues flourished in the fragrant garden of her soul. She herself declared: "I have not even had to struggle. I have been able to say with our holy Father St John of the Cross: 'My house is entirely at peace'" (chapter ix, p. 151).

After reading the last chapters of the autobiography, and the *Reminiscences* collected during her illness, read Chapter i, Book III, of the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, where is depicted the state of souls who have attained transforming union. Teresa is here to be recognized in every trait. "The operations of the soul in the state of union are the operations of the Holy Ghost. . . . The actions of such souls only are what they ought to be . . . and not what they ought not to be, because, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, they know what they ought to know . . . remember what they ought to remember, forget what they ought to forget, love what they ought to love. . . . Thus in general the first notions of the faculties of these souls are, as it were, divine." Read, too, the commentary on stanza xxviii of the *Spiritual Canticle*:

" My soul is occupied,
And all my substance in his service;
Now I guard no flock,
Nor have I any other employment :
My sole occupation is love."*

* " The whole substance of the soul is now so occupied with God, so intent upon him, that its very first movements, even inadvertently, have God for their first object and their end. . . . Such a soul is very often doing the work of God, intent upon

I will give some examples. We know the wisdom of the young Novice-Mistress, to which the prioress, the terrible Mother Marie Gonzague, herself bore witness.

“ You did not even consider it imprudent to assure me one day that the divine Master had enlightened my soul and given me the experience of years ” (chapter ix, p. 138).

“ The novices often say : ‘ You have an answer for everything. This time I thought I should puzzle you. Where do you find all that you teach us ? ’ Some are even simple enough to think I can read their souls, because at times it happens that I discover to them—without revelation—the subject of their thoughts ” (chapter x, p. 163).

“ Discover to them—without revelation—the subject of their thoughts ” : this original expression is significant. There is no question of a prophetic light, strictly extraordinary ; no, it is the penetration of a mind habitually enlightened by the gifts of the Holy Ghost. It is simply the working of a faculty moved by God, in one who has attained transforming union, as St John of the Cross explains in various passages.

“ The novices betrayed surprise when she read their inmost thoughts. ‘ This is my secret,’ she said to them ; ‘ I never reprimand you without first invoking our blessed Lady, and asking her to inspire me as to what will be most

him and the things of God, without thinking or reflecting on what it is doing for him. The constant and habitual practice of this has deprived it of all conscious reflection, and even of that fervour which it usually had when it began to act ” (*A Spiritual Canticle*, stanza xxviii). This passage is strictly applicable to Teresa of the Child Jesus towards the end of her life. It will be remembered how on her death-bed she answered her infirmarian’s question : “ What do you say to him ? ” “ I say nothing : *I love him.* ”

for your good, and I am often astonished myself at the things I teach you. At such times I feel that I make no mistake, and that it is Jesus who speaks by my lips" (Epilogue, p. 211).

In reading the pages of childish poetry which make up the *Story of the Little White Flower*, who has not been struck by these words of singular depth and import?

"For some months the divine Master has entirely changed his method of cultivating his Little Flower. . . . Even were all creatures to draw near to admire and flatter it, that would not add a shade of idle satisfaction to the true joy which thrills it, on realizing that in God's eyes it is but a poor, worthless thing, and nothing more" (chapter ix, p. 134).

We are conscious here of a soul who lived face to face with the primal Truth, who caught glimpses of God's Being, and by contrast of the creature's nothingness.

"After so many graces, may I not sing with the Psalmist that '*the Lord is good, that his mercy endureth for ever?*' It seems to me that if everyone were to receive such favours, God would be feared by none, but loved to excess; that no one would ever commit the least wilful fault—and this through love, not fear" (chapter viii, p. 132).

"I no longer feel the need of refusing myself these consolations, for my heart is fixed on God" (chapter x, p. 158).

And speaking of her journey to Rome, she makes this reflection: "As yet I had not experienced that '*to the pure all things are pure*,' that a simple and upright soul does not see evil in anything, because evil only exists in impure hearts and not in inanimate objects." She was experiencing it when she wrote,

since she was able to speak with such knowledge; and this recalls what St John of the Cross says of souls who have attained to the spiritual marriage.* And again we have this expression: "I am like one risen from the dead."

But the most authentic sign of her transformation was in the perfect union of her will with that of her Beloved. To choose one quotation out of a hundred: "I love all that he does," she said. Nothing but the divine good pleasure had any attraction for her. Her contemplative heart was so like that of the blessed, fixed unchangeably in good by the vision of the divine essence.

She was absolutely indifferent to both life and death:

"Dear Mother, it seems to me that at present there is nothing to impede my upward flight, for I have no longer any desire save to love him till I die. I am free; I fear nothing now. . . ." (chapter ix, p. 142).

Her desire to *die of love*, like all her other desires, was to be granted. To prepare her for this death, her heavenly Father sent her the final trial which may be called the martyrdom of faith. He allowed her to be enveloped in a darker and longer spiritual night than she had hitherto known. It was without inter-

* "The soul is now in a certain sense like Adam in paradise, who knew no evil. It is so innocent that it sees no evil; neither does it consider anything to be amiss. It will hear much that is evil and will see it with its eyes, and yet it shall not be able to understand it, because it has no evil habits whereby to judge of it. God has rooted out of it those imperfect habits and that ignorance resulting from the evil of sin, by the perfect habit of true wisdom" (*A Spiritual Canticle*, stanza xxvi).

mittence during the last eighteen months of her life. This is what she says:

“ But during the Paschal days, so full of light, our Lord made me understand that there really are in truth souls bereft of faith and hope, who, through abuse of grace, lose these precious treasures, the only source of pure and lasting joy. He allowed my soul to be overwhelmed with darkness, and the thought of heaven, which had consoled me from my earliest childhood, now became a source of conflict and torture. This trial did not last merely for days or weeks; I have been suffering for months, and I still await deliverance. I wish I could express what I feel, but it is beyond me. One must have passed through this dark tunnel to understand its blackness. . . . The mists about me have penetrated my very soul and have enveloped me so completely that I cannot even picture to myself this promised country . . . all has faded away. When my heart, weary of the surrounding darkness, tries to find some rest in the thought of a life to come, my anguish increases. It seems to me that out of the darkness I hear the mocking voice of the unbeliever: ‘ You dream of a land of light and fragrance, you dream that the Creator of these wonders will be yours for ever, you think one day to escape from these mists where you now languish. Nay, rejoice in death, which will give you, not what you hope for, but a night darker still, the night of utter nothingness ’ . . . This description of what I suffer is as far removed from reality as the first rough outline is from the model, but I fear that to write more were to blaspheme . . . even now I may have said too much. May God forgive me! He knows that I try to live by faith, though it does not afford me the least consolation. *I have made more acts of Faith during the last year than during all the rest of my life.*

“ Each time that the enemy would provoke me to combat, I behave as a gallant soldier. I know that a duel is an act of cowardice, and so, without once looking him in the face, I turn my back on the foe, then I hasten to my Saviour and vow that I am ready to shed my blood in witness of my belief in heaven. I tell him, if only he will deign to open it

to poor unbelievers, I am content to sacrifice all pleasure in the thought of it as long as I live. And in spite of this trial, which robs me of all comfort, I can still say: '*Thou hast given me, O Lord, delight in all thou dost*' (Ps. xci 5). For what joy can be greater than to suffer for thy love? The more the suffering is and the less it appears before men, the more is it to thy honour and glory. Even if—but I know it to be impossible—thou shouldst not deign to heed my sufferings,* I should still be happy to bear them, in the hope that, by my tears, I might perhaps prevent or atone for one sin against faith.

"No doubt, dear Mother, you will think that I exaggerate somewhat the *night of my soul*. If you judge by the poems I have composed this year, it must seem as though I have been flooded with consolations, like a child for whom the veil of faith is almost rent asunder. And yet it is not a veil—it is a wall which rises to the very heavens and shuts out the starry sky. When I sing of the happiness of heaven and the eternal possession of God, I do not feel any joy therein, for I sing only of what I wish to believe. Sometimes, I confess, a little ray of sunshine illumines my dark night, and I enjoy peace for an instant, but later, the remembrance of this ray of light, instead of consoling me, makes the blackness thicker still.

"And yet never have I felt so deeply how sweet and merciful is the Lord. He did not send me this heavy cross when it might have discouraged me, but at a time when I was able to bear it. Now it simply takes from me all natural satisfaction I might feel in my longing for heaven" (chapter ix, pp. 139-142).

This trial had also its purifying effect. The little victim of love recognized it herself. She said it had taken away "all natural satisfaction" from the longing for heaven which she had had since her childhood. But the trial undoubtedly belonged to

* The translation is here inexact. It should rather be: "If, by impossibility, thou shouldst be ignorant of [*deviez ignorer*] my sufferings."—TRANSLATORS.

the unitive life, for it was rather a consequence of transforming love than a preparation for it. The Carmelite contemplative was suffering, that she might "enter into the heart of the thicket"** of the divine wisdom and the supereminent knowledge of Christ. She suffered because she was transformed into Jesus crucified, and with him and in him was redeeming her brethren.

The sufferings of the perfect differ from those of souls who are in the state of spiritual espousals. In those who have not yet attained to the spiritual marriage, darkness alternates with light, sorrow with joy; but in the perfect, the extremes of anguish and of bliss harmonize continually in the heights of a "*peace which surpasseth all understanding*" (Phil. iv).

The trial of St Teresa's last year on earth was of this kind. The long extract I have just given is convincing enough; but the nearer the end of her life, the sweeter became the harmony.

* "The thicket which the soul desires to enter may be fittingly understood as signifying the great and many trials and tribulations which the soul longs for, because suffering is most sweet and profitable to it, inasmuch as it is the way by which it enters more and more into the thicket of the delicious wisdom of God. The most pure suffering leads to the most pure and the deepest knowledge, and consequently to the purest and highest joy, for that is the issue of the deepest knowledge. Thus, the soul, not satisfied with ordinary suffering, says: 'Let us enter into the heart of the thicket, even the anguish of death, that I may see God.' Job, desiring to suffer that he might see God, thus speaks: 'Who will grant that my request may come, and that God may give me what I look for? And that he that hath begun may destroy me, that he may let loose his hand and cut me off? And that this may be my comfort, that afflicting me with sorrow, he spare not'" (*A Spiritual Canticle*, stanza xxxvi).

“ O my God! how good thou art to the little Victim of thy merciful Love! Now, even when thou joinest these bodily pains to those of my soul, I cannot bring myself to say: ‘ *The anguish of death hath encompassed me.*’ I rather cry out in my gratitude: ‘ *I have gone down into the valley of the shadow of death, but I fear no evil, because thou, O Lord, art with me*’ (Ps. xxii 4) ” (*Epilogue*, p. 219).

“ I suffer much . . . very much! and yet my state is one of profound peace. All my longings have been realized. . . . I am full of confidence ” (*Epilogue*, p. 216).

“ Oh! how good God is! Truly he must be very good to give me the grace to bear all I have to suffer ” (*Epilogue*, p. 218).

But the tide of suffering rose higher and higher. She was suffering for souls; love had made the little Victim of Merciful Love to share in the Son’s work of Redemption. Throughout this long trial she was never without the thought of making reparation for her unbelieving brethren, and the desire to obtain for them the light of faith.

“ *The death of Love which I so much desire is that of Jesus on the cross.*” Little Teresa of the Child Jesus, who had reproduced with such charm the traits of the divine Child, had grown in faith and love; now she wished to reproduce the suffering face of Jesus, and justify her second title of nobility, *Teresa of the Holy Face*. She was to die like her divine Bridegroom, apparently abandoned by her heavenly Father, while the summits of her soul were already bathed in eternal splendour. “ Do not be troubled, dear Mother,” she said to Mother Agnes, “ if I suffer much and show no sign of happiness at the end. Did not our Lord himself die a ‘ Victim

of Love'? And see how great was his agony" (p. 219).

Her death was in truth like that of her Beloved. On the morning of her last day, speaking of her last night on earth, she said: "It has been pure agony, without a ray of consolation." At half-past two she sat up in bed and exclaimed: "The chalice is full to overflowing! I could never have believed that it was possible to suffer so intensely. . . . I can only explain it by my extreme desire to save souls. . . ." And a little while after: "Yes, all that I have written about my thirst for suffering is really true! I do not regret having surrendered myself to Love." A few minutes after seven, turning to the Prioress, she asked: "Mother, is it not the agony? . . . am I not going to die?" "Yes, my child, it is the agony, but Jesus perhaps wills that it be prolonged for some hours." . . . "Ah, very well then . . . very well . . . I do not wish to suffer less! . . ." Then, looking at her crucifix: "Oh! . . . I love him! . . . My God, I . . . love . . . thee!"

This was her last act of love, still in naked faith. But this time her ardour had "broken the web."* She opened her eyes, shining with the peace of

* "O Living Flame of Love,
That woundest tenderly
My soul in its inmost depth!
As thou art no longer grievous,
Perfect thy work, if it be thy will,
Break the web of this sweet encounter."

The web here symbolizes the soul's union with the body, which hinders the beatific vision, as St Paul says: "We know, if our earthly . . . habitation be dissolved, that we have a building of God . . . in heaven" (2 Cor. v 1).

heaven and unutterable joy, and fixed them above a statue of our Lady. The ecstasy of faith lasted the space of a *Credo* and ended in vision.

A few months before her death (July, 1897) she had said: "All that I do, little souls must be able to do likewise." If it be true, as I think I have proved, that she desired and attained the summit of the mystical life whence the soul at death goes straight to heaven, the words I have just quoted, like all St Teresa's teaching about her "little way," have a singularly important significance. "If I have guided you wrongly by my little way," she said to her novices before she died, "I will come back to tell you so." She has come back, but it was to say: "My way is sure"—that way of pure faith and boundless desires. The "little doctrine" of St Teresa continues the traditional teaching; the grace of the virtues and the gifts* in its full development achieves transforming union, and every soul may aspire to this fulness.

At the same time, the "little doctrine" and the great example of St Teresa show us better than many learned dissertations how, in this normal development of sanctifying grace, we must distinguish the essential from the accidental. It seems to have been her special mission to effect both in theory and practice a divesting, a separation, leaving on one side all that is accessory, that the essential alone might remain and be manifested. (This is the note which distinguishes her and unites her essentially with the spirit of her Order—the spirit

* The Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost.

of St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross, which she also eminently possessed). I hope this precious lesson may destroy many errors and prejudices. If the traditional teaching on the call of Christian souls to contemplation maintains that *all little souls can do what Teresa did*, it maintains also that *they are not asked to do more than Teresa did*. Assuredly! For there is nothing higher than the end she attained at the summit, as it were, of supreme humility by that "little way" which is the sure means, possible to everyone, of reaching, by the divine grace, both contemplation and transforming union: *neque ambulavi in magnis, neque in mirabilibus super me.*

M. V. BERNADOT, O.P.

HER APOSTOLIC ZEAL

ZEAL is to love what the flame is to the fire.* If the fire be glowing, the flame will be devouring. We have seen the love with which God consumed his little victim, now we turn with wonder to see the radiation of that love.

The double precept of love regards God and our neighbour. Zeal also has its double manifestation: zeal for the glory of God, and zeal for the salvation of souls. But the last is necessarily subordinate to the first, of which it is but the consequence; for love, rightly understood, is *one* in a soul in the state of grace, as it is one in the blessed Trinity. As the Father loves his adopted children and his only begotten Son with one same love, as the Son loves us with the love he receives from his Father,† we also love our brethren with this same participated love. This is what raises Christian charity so high, to an immeasurable height above the purest and most legitimate human love, and makes the humblest works which it inspires immeasurably more precious than the most generous and disinterested philanthropy.

St Teresa, whose whole ambition was to make

* “*Zelus, quocumque modo sumatur, ex intensione amoris provenit*” (St Thomas, *Sum. Th.*, Ia IIae, Q. 28, Art. 4).

† “*As the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you*” (John xv 9).

her life simply an act of love, never followed the attraction of her ardent and generous nature towards the active ministry for souls; she knew how to subordinate her zeal to God's glory. And that is the whole secret of its fruitfulness. "There is but one thing to be done here below: to love Jesus, and to save souls for him *that he may be more loved.*"* Such was the order of charity which ruled her whole life.

As the mystical ascent of St Teresa has been studied, it is well that we should now study the progress of her apostolic zeal—the two are parallel. At Carmel, for the nun as for the friar, the contemplative life and the apostolic life are one; one demands the other, or, to be more exact, the apostolic life is the overflow of the contemplative life. But it is only at love's summit that the two are perfectly harmonized.

The apostle is only fitted to devote himself to others when he is immutably fixed, as it were, in contemplation of the Truth, wholly possessed by the essential Good. He is only perfect when he has reached transforming union.

Teresa herself describes her vocation to the apostolate, how Jesus made of her *a fisher of souls*, as she expresses it, and how she first cast her net.

"One Sunday, closing my book at the end of Mass, a picture of our Lord on the cross half slipped out, showing only one of his divine hands, pierced and bleeding. I felt an indescribable thrill, such as I had never felt before. My heart was torn with grief to see that precious blood falling

* Letter VI to Céline.

to the ground, and no one caring to treasure it as it fell, and I resolved to remain continually in spirit at the foot of the cross, that I might receive the divine dew of salvation and pour it forth upon souls. From that day the cry of my dying Saviour, 'I thirst!' sounded incessantly in my heart, and kindled therein a burning zeal hitherto unknown to me. My one desire was to give my Beloved to drink; I felt myself consumed with thirst for souls, and I longed at any cost to snatch sinners from the everlasting flames of hell.

"In order still further to enkindle my ardour, our divine Master soon proved to me how pleasing to him was my desire. Just then I heard much talk of a notorious criminal, Pranzini, who was sentenced to death for several shocking murders, and, as he was quite impenitent, everyone feared he would be eternally lost. How I longed to avert this irreparable calamity! In order to do so I employed all the spiritual means I could think of, and, knowing that my own efforts were unavailing, I offered for his pardon the infinite merits of our Saviour and the treasures of Holy Church.

"Need I say that in the depths of my heart I felt certain my request would be granted? But, that I might gain courage to persevere in the quest for souls, I said in all simplicity: 'My God, I am quite sure that thou wilt pardon this unhappy Pranzini. I should still think so if he did not confess his sins or give any sign of sorrow, because I have such confidence in thy unbounded mercy; but this is my first sinner, and therefore I beg for just one sign of repentance to reassure me.' My prayer was granted to the letter. My father never allowed us to read the papers, but I did not think there was any disobedience in looking at the part about Pranzini. The day after his execution I hastily opened the paper, *La Croix*, and what did I see? Tears betrayed my emotion; I was obliged to run out of the room. Pranzini had mounted the scaffold without confessing or receiving absolution, and the executioners were already dragging him towards the fatal block, when all at once, apparently in answer to a sudden inspiration, he turned round, seized the crucifix which the priest was offering to him, and kissed our Lord's sacred wounds three times. . . .

I had obtained the sign I had asked for, and to me it was especially sweet. Was it not when I saw the precious blood flowing from the wounds of Jesus that the thirst for souls first took possession of me? I wished to give them to drink of the blood of the immaculate Lamb that it might wash away their stains, and the lips of 'my first born' had been pressed to these divine wounds. What a wonderful answer!

"After receiving this grace my desire for the salvation of souls increased day by day. I seemed to hear our Lord whispering to me, as he did to the Samaritan woman: '*Give me to drink!*' It was indeed an exchange of love: upon souls I poured forth the precious blood of Jesus, and to Jesus I offered these souls refreshed with the dew of Calvary. In this way I sought to quench his thirst; but the more I gave him to drink, so much the more did the thirst of my own poor soul increase, and I accepted it as the most delightful recompense" (chapter v, p. 73).

To quench this thirst she would go to Carmel. The motto of the prophet Elias, which she had seen on the shield of the Order, must have delighted her: *Zelo zelatus sum pro Domino Deo exercituum.**

In every religious Order, however, zeal is ardent. A saint has said, "Where there is no zeal, there is no love." In the Carthusian solitude there is burning zeal for the holy name of God, in the Benedictine cloister for the beauty of God's house and the splendour of his praise; among the daughters of Dominic zeal for the spread of Truth predominates. All this is indeed zeal for God's glory and kingdom; but it was especially the *Sitio* of Jesus on the cross that little Teresa heard, and he who teaches without words whispered in her heart that at Carmel

* "With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts" (3 Kings xix 10).

she would best quench the thirst of her Beloved and share in his work of redemption.

St Teresa of Avila, the great reformer of Carmel, gave, in fact, this essentially apostolic form to that zeal for the God of hosts which fired Elias the Thesbite: the conversion of sinners, the salvation and sanctity of souls, especially through the sanctification of priests and religious devoted to the apostolic ministry.*

* For those of our readers who do not yet know them, I will here give the pages from *The Way of Perfection* where St Teresa clearly indicates her aim in reforming Carmel. We shall thus see more clearly how St Teresa of the Child Jesus perfectly realized the Carmelite type:

" Let us now return to the reason why our Lord has assembled us in this house, in which I am most desirous that we should please his Majesty. Seeing how great are the disasters of these times (although some persons have imagined that force of arms could stop this great evil), and that no human power could quench the devouring flames of heresy, which spread most rapidly, I think we should act as people do when, in time of war, the enemy has overrun the country, and the king finds himself hard pressed. He retires into a strongly fortified town from whence he sometimes makes a sortie. The small company with him in the citadel, being picked men, are better than a large army of cowardly soldiers; thus, they often come off victors, or at least, if not victors, they are not vanquished, for there is no traitor in their ranks and famine alone can conquer them. No famine can force *us* to surrender—it may kill us—it cannot vanquish us! But why have I told you all this? To teach you, my sisters, that we must ask God to grant that, of all the good Christians in this fort, none may desert to the enemy, that no traitor may be found here, and that the captains of this castle, or city—that is, the preachers and theologians—may be proficient in the way of our Lord. Since most of these are religious, you must pray that they may advance in perfection and may follow their vocation more perfectly. This is very necessary, for, as I said, it is the arm of the Church, and not of the State, which must defend us now. We, being women, can fight for our King in neither way: let us, then, strive so to live that our prayers may avail to help these servants of God, who have laboured hard

However, it does not seem as though the divine Master at first revealed to Teresa all the deep realities of that motherhood of souls which already so attracted her, or that she foresaw all the apostolic joys which contemplation held for her. She seems

to arm themselves with learning and virtue with which to help their Sovereign. You may ask why I insist so much on this, and why I say we must help those who are better than ourselves. I will explain this, as I do not think you realize how much you owe to God for withdrawing you so entirely from all earthly cares, from occasions of sin, and from the society of the world. This is a very special favour, and one not shared in by the men I have been speaking of. Indeed, it would be less fitting for them now than ever, for they have to strengthen the weak and to encourage the timid. What a state soldiers would get into without their captain! These defenders of the Church must live amongst men and associate with them, they must frequent the Court, and even, at times, conform outwardly to its customs.

“ Do you think, my daughters, that it is easy to keep friends with the world, to live in it, to transact worldly business, and, as I said, to conform to its usages, and yet, in one’s heart, to remain a stranger and enemy of this same world, like an exile? In short, not to be men but to be angels? Unless they are all this, they do not deserve the name of captains, and may our Lord prevent them ever leaving their cells, for they will do more harm than good. This is no time for defects to appear in the teachers. . . . I wish you to lead such lives as to merit to obtain these two favours from God. Firstly, that among very learned theologians and religious there may be many with the qualifications I describe, and that our Lord may perfect those who are less fitted, for one who is perfect can do more than many who are imperfect. The other favour is, that, when they are engaged in this war (which, as I said, is a fierce one) our Lord may uphold them with his hand and protect them from the many dangers of the world, and may stop their ears in these perilous seas, to the song of the sirens. If we can prevail with God to grant any of these things, though we are enclosed in this house, we are fighting for him. . . . If your prayers and desires, your disciplines and fasts, are not performed for these intentions, know that you are not doing the work nor carrying out the design for which God placed you here . . .” (*Way of Perfection*, chapter iii).

to have looked forward to her life at Carmel in the first place as a complete self-immolation through love. In the reminiscences of her pilgrimage to Rome we find this suggestive incident :

“ During her journey to Rome (*Esprit*, p. 27) a pilgrim handed her some Annals of Missionary Sisters. After accepting them enthusiastically, she gave them to her sister, saying : ‘ I will not read them, I have too great a desire to devote myself to works of zeal, and I want to hide myself in an enclosed convent, so as to give myself more entirely to God.’ She meant by this to sacrifice all the joys and satisfactions of the active apostolate. Thus she found ‘ comfort for her heart ’ in ‘ greater self-sacrifice.’ She said later : ‘ Only complete self-immolation can be called love.’ ”

The anecdote is significant, the admission clear. Teresa chose Carmel out of pure love, to give herself “ more completely to God ” by sacrificing the active ministry among souls. This was her chief aim—to surrender herself completely ; secondly, she would go to Carmel for souls. The subordination is safeguarded, the order of charity is respected. At the canonical examination, when the ecclesiastical Superior asked her why she had come to Carmel, she replied : “ I have come to save souls, and especially to pray for priests ” (chapter vii). “ Oh ! how beautiful is our vocation ! We Carmelites are called to preserve ‘ *the salt of the earth*. ’ We offer our prayers and sacrifices for the Apostles of the Lord ; we ourselves ought to be their apostles, while they, by word and example, are preaching the Gospel to our brethren. Have we not a glorious mission to fulfil ? But I must say no more, for I feel that on this subject my pen would run on for

ever." And she tells us that when first making known to her father her intention of entering Carmel, the same thought inspired her. "I chose the Feast of Pentecost on which to make my great disclosure. All day I was praying for light from the Holy Ghost, and begging the Apostles to pray for me, to inspire me with the words I ought to use. Were they not the very ones to help a timid child whom God destined to become an apostle of apostles by prayer and sacrifice?"

For only by prayer and sacrifice in solitude does the Carmelite seek to satiate her burning zeal. As a child Teresa had dreamt of glory; she naïvely relates how, in reading the patriotic deeds of French heroines, and especially the life of Joan of Arc, she had felt a great desire to imitate them, and that Jesus had then made her understand that "the only true glory is that which lasts for ever; and that to attain it there is no necessity to do brilliant deeds, but rather to hide from the eyes of others, and even from oneself. . . ."

Then she had become enamoured of being hidden and forgotten. Perhaps no Carmelite ever understood more thoroughly the inspired text which gave the Rule of Carmel its origin: "*Get thee hence, and go towards the east and hide thyself by the torrent of Carith which is over against the Jordan, and there thou shalt drink of the torrent*" (3 Kings xvii 3, 4). She understood the hidden mystery of Holy Scripture—at Carmel she shut herself up in her cell as in a desert, where she aimed at being forgotten by everyone, and living under the eyes of Jesus alone.

While yet a postulant she wrote to one of her sisters: "I desire only to be forgotten . . . not contempt, not insults—that would be too much honour for the 'grain of sand'; for if it were despised it would mean that someone was looking at it and thinking of it." On her profession day she carried on her heart a paper bearing these words: "O Jesus, grant that no one may think of me; that I may be trodden under foot, forgotten, as a little grain of sand" (chapter viii, p. 120).

She hid herself so successfully that even her Sisters only knew after her death the treasure of heroic sanctity which they had possessed for some years. Her first miracles caused astonishment; the Prioress, Mother Marie de Gonzague, was so far from thinking of saving Teresa's clothes as reliques, that she had already given her old habit to a lay sister working in the garden.

But do not think that the Carmelite nun in her narrow cell, in that vast interior solitude, lives in selfish isolation, wrapped up in herself. On the contrary, there she comes into contact with the invisible realities (far higher than those which only the senses reach) and with the world of souls. There the dogma of the Communion of Saints shines forth in a new light; there the mystery of Christ's mystical body is revealed. She is conscious of a new life. She feels herself to be a member of that body of which Christ is the head;* and all the members of this body become dear to her—I will go so far as to say, even as Christ himself. With St Paul she

* Cf. Romans xii and Ephesians v.

can exclaim in all truth: “Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?” (2 Cor. xi 29).

Buried in Christ Jesus,* her heart has become large even as his by whom she lives, and not a creature is excluded from it. Should she read, for instance, in missionary annals, of some poor slave ill-treated by his master, her heart is stirred with something of what our Lady felt at the scourging of her Son. It is her brother who is beaten, and she shudders. Her heart goes out lovingly to the wretched pariah spurned by everyone, to the hideous leper isolated in his hut: they are suffering members of her Bridegroom.

Since she is not absorbed by the cares of one particular work, all works that spring up in the Church have her sympathy and her prayers, all have some special claim on her interest. Should a soul come to her, who but yesterday was unknown, it seems to her as though she had been waiting for it; and she feels something like a mother when she is shown the new-born child whom she has carried for long months in her womb.†

I am propounding nothing but what is known to every director of Carmelite nuns. I think, too, that St Teresa surpassed all her Sisters in love, and in the laying aside of her own personality. And I am sure that her heart was even larger and more tender, her zeal even mightier and more burning

* “You are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Col. iii 3).

† Cf. Gal. iv 19: “My little children, of whom I am in labour again until Christ be formed in you.”

than theirs. I apply to her, without hesitation, the words of Scripture from the Introit in the Mass of St Teresa of Avila: "*Dedit ei Dominus . . . latitudinem cordis quasi arenam quae est in littore maris* (3 Kings iv, 29).

Moreover, these are not conjectures *a priori*; we have her words and works, which betray the zeal that consumed her in her solitude. The flame burns high in her verses when she pours out her soul in all simplicity. Many extracts might be given (see, particularly, the verses entitled, "*Remember, Thou!*"). In her letters we see the same constant solicitude for the salvation of souls:

"All I desire is to see God loved, and if in heaven I could no longer work for his glory, I should prefer exile to home" (Letter to a missionary).

"Brother, I am so happy to die! Yes, happy . . . not because I shall be free from suffering: on the contrary, suffering combined with love seems the one thing worthy of desire in this vale of tears; but happy to die because far more than on earth I shall help the souls I hold dear" (*ibid.*, p. 307).

Again we find the flame of her zeal in this prayer inspired by a statue of St Joan of Arc:

"O Lord God of hosts, who hast said in thy Gospel: '*I am not come to bring peace but a sword*,' arm me for the combat. I burn to do battle for thy glory, but I pray thee to enliven my courage . . . Then with holy David I shall be able to exclaim: '*Thou alone art my shield; it is thou, O Lord, who teachest my hands to fight*.' O my Beloved, I know the warfare in which I am to engage; it is not on the open field I shall fight. . . . I am a prisoner held captive by thy love; of my own free will I have riveted the fetters

which bind me to thee, and cut me off for ever from the world. My sword is love! With it—like Joan of Arc—' I will drive the strangers from the land, and I will have thee proclaimed King '—over the Kingdom of souls.

" Of a truth thou hast no need of so weak an instrument as I, but Joan, thy chaste and valiant spouse, has said : ' We must do battle before God gives the victory.' O my Jesus! I will do battle, then, for thy love, until the evening of my life. As thou didst not will to enjoy rest upon earth, I wish to follow thy example. . . . (Prayer.)

" And give to us souls, dear Lord. . . . We thirst for souls!—above all for the souls of apostles and martyrs . . . that through them we may inflame all poor sinners with love of thee " (*Consecration to the Holy Face*).

But it is especially in that wonderful eleventh chapter of her autobiography that she has made known her ardent desire :

" To be thy spouse, O my Jesus, to be a daughter of Carmel, and by my union with thee to be the mother of souls, should not all this content me? And yet other vocations make themselves felt—I feel called to the priesthood and to the apostolate—I would be a martyr, a doctor of the Church. I should like to accomplish the most heroic deeds—the spirit of the crusader burns within me, and I long to die on the field of battle in defence of Holy Church. . . . Like the prophets and doctors, I would be a light unto souls; I would travel to every land to preach thy name, O my Beloved, and raise on heathen soil the glorious standard of thy cross. One mission alone would not satisfy my longings. I would spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth, even to the most distant isles. I would be a missionary, not for a few years only, but, were it possible, from the beginning of the world till the consummation of time. Above all, I thirst for the martyr's crown. It was the desire of my earliest days, and the desire has deepened with the years passed in Carmel's narrow cell. But this, too, is folly, since I do not sigh for one torment; I need them all to slake my thirst. Like thee, O adorable Spouse, I would be scourged,

I would be crucified! I would be flayed like St Bartholomew, plunged into boiling oil like St John, or, like St Ignatius of Antioch, ground by the teeth of wild beasts into a bread worthy of God. With St. Agnes and St Cecilia I would offer my neck to the sword of the executioner, and like Joan of Arc I would murmur the name of Jesus at the stake.

“ My heart thrills at the thought of the frightful tortures Christians are to suffer at the time of Antichrist, and I long to undergo them all. Open, O Jesus, the Book of Life, in which are written the deeds of thy saints : all the deeds told in that book I long to have accomplished for thee.”

Such is the solitary of Carmel, hidden “ *by the torrent of Carith*”—that is, in that “ *charity [which] shall cover a multitude of sins.*” And the Lord fulfilled the boundless desires of her zeal by giving her *to drink of the torrent of his pleasure, a pure gift of God, which consists in a certain experience in heart and mind of the power of the divine presence, and the sweetness of the glory from on high.** In this infused contemplation everything is obtained by love; everything, because the Spirit who prays in us,† who asks in us for the salvation of our neighbour, is the same who makes souls “ to will and to accomplish.”‡

How did Teresa of the Child Jesus live for souls ? She gave them her all. She said to a novice who had a great dread of God’s judgements : “ There is but one means of compelling God not to judge us,

* In the supplement of the *Vie Spirituelle* for January, 1924, see my study *La Tradition Mystique du Carmel*. There may be read the text of the *Institutions des premiers Moines*, of which I here give some short extracts.

† Rom. viii 15.

‡ Phil. ii 13.

and it is—to appear before him empty-handed . . . lay nothing by, spend your treasures as you gain them. Were I to live to be eighty, I should always be poor, because I cannot economize. All my earnings are immediately spent on the ransom of souls" (*Counsels and Reminiscences*, pp. 242-243). And to another: "Had I been rich, I could never have seen a poor person hungry without giving him to eat. This is my way also in the spiritual life. There are many souls on the brink of hell, and as my earnings come to hand they are scattered among these sinners. The time has never yet been when I could say: 'Now I am going to work for myself.' "

She did not burden herself with great austerities, with additional penances, but she lived her Carmelite life most perfectly, with an apostolic aim; she was always faithful in the smallest things "to give pleasure to Jesus," and to help souls. She knew that in virtue of the communion of saints, the effect of every least supernatural act reaches all the members of the Church. And this helped her much to be faithful.

She never forgot what she had told the ecclesiastical Superior at her canonical examination: she had come to save souls and especially to pray for priests. This great apostolic solicitude followed her everywhere—working or suffering, it was her spur, her consolation; to sum up everything in a modern expression, it was the *leitmotiv* of her Carmelite life. "Jesus desires that the salvation of souls should depend upon our sacrifices, our love," she

wrote; "let us offer our sufferings to Jesus to save them. Oh, let us live for them, let us be apostles!" (*Esprit*).

A novice relates that one washing-day she was sauntering towards the laundry looking at the flowers as she passed through the garden. Sister Teresa of the Child Jesus followed her, walking quickly, and soon overtook her. "Is that," she said, "how people hurry themselves when they have children, and are obliged to work to procure them food?" This is delightful, and so is the following incident: "The Infirmary had advised her to take a little walk in the garden for a quarter of an hour each day. This recommendation was for her a command. One afternoon a Sister, noticing what an effort it cost her, said: 'Sœur Thérèse, you would do much better to rest; walking like this cannot do you any good. You only tire yourself!' 'That is true,' she replied, 'but do you know what gives me strength? I offer each step for some missionary. I think that possibly over there, far away, one of them is weary and tired in his apostolic labours, and to lessen his fatigue I offer mine to the good God.'"

If she accepted an alleviation, it was again with the aim of helping missionaries. "I am convinced that medicines are powerless to cure me," she said, "but I have made a covenant with God that the poor missionaries who have neither time nor means to take care of themselves may profit thereby." In her zeal we find the great reason of her love for suffering. "One cannot attain the end without

adopting the means, and as our Lord made me understand that it was by the cross he would give me souls, the more crosses I met with the stronger grew my attraction for suffering" (chapter vii).

As I have already said, St Teresa did not give herself up like so many of the saints to terrible penances as reparation for sin and the conversion of sinners. She was satisfied with observance of her Rule; but she kept it with a heroism beyond the strength of a delicate child. By this observance, faithfully kept until the year before her death, she rapidly spent herself for souls. For them she was "lavish of her life."* The expression is her own; it is both exact and original. To be lavish is to give without calculating. She never calculated with her fatigue, her sufferings, or her inability. She drained her strength, drop by drop, without asking or desiring or receiving the least alleviation. By a special permission of God, who willed that the young nun's virtue should be heroic, the Prioress made no allowance whatever for her youth. "A soul of such mettle ought not to be dealt with as a child; dispensations are not meant for her. Let her be, for God sustains her," answered Mother Marie de Gonzague, when a kindly companion remarked Sister Teresa's fatigue, betrayed by her pale face. "Besides, if she is really ill she should come and tell me herself." But it was a principle with the generous little Sister that we should go to the end of our strength before we complain; and to the end of her strength she went, always upheld by

* Cf. *La Rose effeuillée*.

her extraordinary energy, and above all by her love for souls.

St Teresa suffered from cold till she felt "ready to die of it." She suffered from hunger, from thirst, from want of sleep; she suffered much, nay, constantly, and always for souls.*

That observance of Rule is the sweet and hidden martyrdom to which the Carmelite nun is destined. As the apostle and the teaching Sister work to their life's end for those they teach, as the nursing Brother or Sister spend their strength to the uttermost at the bedside of the sick, so, too, the contemplative nun gives to others her whole being in the observance of her Rule *usque ad mortem*. Perhaps the world will not understand this apparently material form of self-donation. What is the use of spending one's strength in fasting, abstinence and vigils? Yet this is the holocaust God expects from his chosen ones, the price he demands from them for the ransom of sinners.

St Teresa gave it joyfully, as she gave everything, hiding with a smile the heroic effort it cost her. She had a haemorrhage on the night of Maundy Thursday. On Good Friday she fasted like all her Sisters on bread and water, and passed the whole day without the smallest dispensation. For more than a year afterwards she joined in all the community duties, hiding her exhaustion as much as

* The book containing the juridical depositions of the process for canonization tells of heroic acts which she only disclosed to Mother Agnes on her death-bed. They belong, however, to the ordinary spiritual life, and did not take her out of the little way of abandonment which she continually followed and taught.

possible. After a day of suffering, at night she went to Matins, and then returned with difficulty to her cell, climbing the dormitory stairs alone, pausing at each step to take breath; she reached her cell so exhausted that it sometimes took her an hour to undress. And then she had only a hard straw mattress to rest on, even when her back had been riddled with cautery. I may be forgiven these details, for it is necessary to show the workings of zeal in this ardent little soul.

Her cell, the scene of such generous immolation, was a centre of the apostolate for nine years.* Who shall say what showers of grace fell from it on every corner of the world? We, unknowing, have had a share in them. To show our gratitude let us pray, as she asked before her death, that she may make God loved by many souls.

She suffered in soul as well as in body. The painful martyrdom of her temptations against faith, which lasted till death, is well known. Here again the thought of sinners upheld her.

“. . . The darkness did not understand that he was the light of the world. But, dear Lord, thy child has understood thou art the light divine; she asks thy pardon for her unbeliefing brethren, and is willing to eat the bread of sorrow as long as thou mayest wish. For love of thee she will sit at that table of bitterness where these poor sinners take their food, and she will not stir from it until thou givest the sign.

* “Much of my happiness was acquired in that little cell, for I have suffered so much there, and I should have been happy to die there,” said St Teresa when she was brought down to the infirmary, two months before her death (*Epilogue*, pp. 207-208).

But may she not say in her own name, and in the name of her guilty brethren : ' *O God, be merciful to us sinners!*' Send us away justified. May all those on whom faith does not shine see the light at last ! O my God, if that table which they profane can be purified by one that loves thee, I am willing to remain there alone to eat the bread of tears, until it shall please thee to bring me to thy kingdom of light : the only favour I ask is that I may never offend thee " (chapter ix, p. 140).

In the August preceding her death she suffered inexpressible anguish for some unknown soul, remaining several days as though beside herself. One night she begged the Infirmarian to sprinkle her bed with holy water, saying : " I am besieged by the devil. I do not see him, but I feel him ; he torments me and holds me with a grip of iron, that I may not find one crumb of comfort ; he augments my woes, that I may be driven to despair. . . . And I cannot pray. I can only look at our blessed Lady and say : ' Jesus ! ' How needful is that prayer we use at Compline : ' *Procul recedant somnia et noctium phantasmata !*' (' Free us from the phantoms of the night '). Something mysterious is happening within me. I am not suffering for myself, but for some other soul, and Satan is angry " (Epilogue, p. 206).

Her zeal had made her a victim for souls. She had made this covenant with God : " I ask God that all the prayers offered for me may serve, not to relieve my sufferings, but for the salvation of sinners."

Even in the terrors of death the apostolic fire was at its height. " Dear Mother, the chalice is full to

overflowing! I could never have believed that it was possible to suffer so intensely. . . . I can only explain it by my extreme desire to save souls. . . .”

* * * * *

I have shown sufficiently clearly how St Teresa was an apostle in her desert, by work and self-immolation in carrying even to heroism that “*charity which shall cover a multitude of sins.*” Now let us see how she “drank of the torrent.”

Her life bore no stamp of feverish enthusiasm or of gloomy austerity from the burning flame of her boundless desires and the sustained effort of her mortification. In little Teresa all was calm and sweetness. She simply yielded herself with a child’s submission to the spirit of love. Hers was the zeal of a contemplative, of a mystic moved by the Gifts of the Spirit; and it is this especially which explains the plentiful fruit they bear and will bear in her to the end of time.

“One day after Holy Communion, our Lord made me understand these words of the *Canticles*: ‘*Draw me: we will run after thee to the odour of thy ointments.*’ O Jesus, there is no need to say: ‘In drawing me, draw also the souls that I love’—these words: ‘*Draw me,*’ suffice. When a soul has let herself be taken captive by the inebriating odour of thy perfumes, she cannot run alone; as a natural consequence of her attraction towards thee, the souls of all those she loves are drawn in her train.

“Just as a torrent carries into the depths of the sea all that it meets on its way, so, my Jesus, does the soul who plunges into the shoreless ocean of thy love bring with it all its treasures (chapter xi, p. 173).

“By asking to be drawn, we desire an intimate union with the object of our love. If iron and fire were endowed

with reason, and the iron could say : ' *Draw me!*' would not that prove its desire to be identified with the fire to the point of sharing its substance? Well, this is precisely my prayer. I asked Jesus to draw me into the fire of his love, and to unite me so closely to himself that he may live and act in me. I feel that the more the fire of love consumes my heart, so much the more shall I say : ' *Draw me!*' and the more also will souls who draw near me *run swiftly in the sweet odour of the Beloved*. Yes, they will run—we shall all run together, for souls that are on fire can never be at rest. They may, indeed, like St Mary Magdalen, sit at the feet of Jesus, listening to his sweet and burning words, but, though they seem to give him nothing, they give much more than Martha, who busied herself about many things. It is not Martha's work that our Lord blames, but her oversolicitude; his blessed Mother humbly occupied herself in the same kind of work when she prepared the meals for the Holy Family. All the saints have understood this, especially those who have illumined the earth with the light of Christ's teaching. Was it not from prayer that St Paul, St Augustine, St Thomas Aquinas, St John of the Cross, St Teresa, and so many other friends of God drew that wonderful science which has enthralled the loftiest minds?

" ' Give me a lever and a fulcrum on which to lean it,' said Archimedes, ' and I will lift the world.' What he could not obtain because his request had only a material end, without reference to God, the saints have obtained in all its fulness. They lean on God Almighty's power itself and their lever is the prayer that inflames with love's fire. With this lever they have raised the world—with this lever saints of the Church Militant still raise, and will raise it to the end of time " (chapter xi, p. 176).

These pages admirably describe the apostolic spirit of Carmel. The young nun then possessed the spirit of her Order in its fulness, the double spirit of Elias restored to vigour by the great saint of Avila. St Teresa had perfectly understood the bond uniting the Prophet's two devices: " *The*

Lord of hosts liveth, before whose face I stand" (3 Kings xviii 15) and "*With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts*" (3 Kings xix 10). At Carmel there is complete harmony between the *Sto* and the *Zelo*. By the very fact of contemplating and of loving, the soul carries on a beneficent apostolate in the Church.* Teresa was now running in the odour of the flowers that grow on the holy mountain, and their fruit was sweet to her palate. For in this intense love which sprang from her contemplation—nay, which is contemplation—behold the flower and beauty of Carmel, *flos Carmeli, decor Carmeli*. Zeal is the fruit of this fragrant flower, and the flower, unless it wither in the bud, never fails to bear fruit. But note well that zeal need not be outwardly manifested. This is clear from the definition of it given by St Thomas.† It suffices that it should consume within the soul all that opposes the reign of love, and by prayer and desire remove such hindrances from other souls.‡ Zeal,

* St John of the Cross, *Spiritual Canticle*, stanza xxviii : "An instant of pure love is more precious in the eyes of God and the soul, and more profitable to the Church, than all other good works together, though it may seem as if nothing were done."

† Ia IIae, Q. 28, Art. 4.

‡ St Teresa of Avila, in her description of the states and degrees of prayer, has admirably shown the relation between mystical contemplation and zeal. This is what she says in particular of the effects of the prayer of union : "[This soul] is so desirous of praising God that she would be willing to annihilate herself and endure a thousand deaths for his sake. She immediately begins to wish to endure great afflictions, and she cannot do otherwise. Her desires of penance, solitude, and of all men knowing God, are excessive, and on this account she feels great pain in seeing him offended" (*Interior Castle*, Fifth Mansion, chapter ii).

thus understood, may be carried by every contemplative to its furthest limits. Under this aspect we have so far studied the zeal of St Teresa. Sanctifying herself at Carmel by means in harmony with the spirit of her Order, she was to become a contemplative afire with zeal for the salvation of souls.

But God, who was pleased to fulfil all his child's 'desires, willed to give Teresa in addition that part of the apostolic life which she had so generously sacrificed in entering Carmel, by entrusting her with an active apostolate in her monastery. He also willed by this to give her as a model to labourers in the vineyard, and to add fresh splendour to her glory as an apostle. "It is better to enlighten than merely to shine" (*Cf. St Thomas, IIa IIae, Q. 188, Art. 6.*)

* * * * *

St Teresa's field of action was a narrow one 'during her life—a noviciate composed of only a few novices; in which, as a sort of deputy, she fulfilled the charge of novice-mistress without even bearing the title or having the full authority of the Office.* But in this obscure work she showed such consummate prudence, such perfect charity, such enlightened and unselfish zeal, that it may be useful to consider the teaching and examples she has left us in the tenth chapter of her autobiography :

"From the moment I entered the sanctuary of souls, I saw at a glance that the task was beyond my strength. Throwing myself without delay into our Lord's arms, I

* Chapter ix, p. 137.

imitated those tiny children, who, when they are frightened, hide their faces on their father's shoulder, and I said: 'Dear Lord, thou seest that I am too small to feed these little ones, but if through me thou wilt give to each what is suitable, then fill my hands, and without leaving the shelter of thy arms, or even turning away, I will distribute thy treasures to the souls who come to me asking for food. Should they find it to their taste, I shall know that this is not due to me but to thee; and if, on the contrary, they find fault with its bitterness, I shall not be cast down, but try to persuade them that it cometh from thee, while taking good care to make no change in it.'

"The knowledge that it was impossible to do anything of myself rendered my task easier. My one interior occupation was to unite myself more and more closely to God, knowing that the rest would be given to me over and above. And, indeed, my hope has never been deceived; I have always found my hands filled when sustenance was needed for the souls of my Sisters. But had I done otherwise, and relied on my own strength, I should very soon have been forced to abandon my task.

"From afar it seems so easy to do good to souls, to teach them to love God more and to model them according to one's own ideas. But, when we draw nearer, we quickly feel that without God's help this is quite as impossible as to bring back the sun when once it has set" (chapter x, p. 158).

In what the young nun has here written we find the fundamental idea of the theology of her Order, the guiding principle of its spirituality: God, the universal Cause, moving souls by his efficacious grace, without ever violating their liberty. Little Teresa probably never read St Thomas;* but she

* Nevertheless, she was not ignorant of the high supernatural value of the doctrine taught by the Angel of the Schools. In the eleventh chapter of *Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux*, we read these suggestive words: "Was it not from prayer that St Paul, St Augustine, St Thomas Aquinas, St John of the Cross, St Teresa and so many other friends of God drew that wonderful science which has enthralled the loftiest minds?"

breathed the air of Carmel, and its atmosphere is purely thomist by reason of its lofty mysticism. Without knowing it, little Teresa thought and wrote as did the great Doctor of the Schools; she inspired others as he himself inspired them; she directed them, in fact, as did her holy Mother of Avila.

I have already quoted these words: "The knowledge that it was impossible to do anything of myself rendered my task easier. My one interior occupation was to unite myself more and more closely to God, knowing that the rest would be given me over and above." The young novice-mistress kept faithfully to her little way; she used her weakness as a claim upon God, as a means of reaching God. The difficulty of her task did not trouble her; with one bound she was in her heavenly Father's arms: "Dear Lord, thou seest that I am too small to feed these little ones." What confidence and strength were hers through this realization of her utter helplessness. "Fill my hands, and without leaving the shelter of thine arms, or even turning away"—here we have the contemplative whose actual union with God is uninterrupted—"I will distribute thy treasures to the souls who come to me asking for food."

"*Thy* treasures," she says. She looks for nothing in herself; all must come from the Father of lights, from whom is "every perfect gift."* The bosom of the Father is her dwelling-place, and it is the utterance of the Word that will work in souls. "All things were made by him, and without him was made nothing that was made."† This is always

* James i 17.

† John i 3.

so. The apostle who forgets this will be painfully disillusioned; but he who has understood it works wonders, or rather the Word works wonders through him.

O little St Teresa, instil into the souls of our future priests and apostles this faith in God our Father, the Universal First Cause on which every intelligent being depends more closely than the stars in their courses. You, in your radiant simplicity, know nothing of our scholastic disputes, and God forbid that we should stir them up around your sweet and lovable personality. I only beseech you, ask for them the grace to accept humbly and lovingly as you did, that dependence of every created intelligence on the supreme Truth, of every created will on the supreme Will, that necessary dependence of participated being on essential Being. Ask for them understanding such as you had of God, the soul, grace, of the abyss which separates the natural from the supernatural world. "All the eloquence of the greatest saints could not bring forth an act of love unless grace touched the heart. *Only Jesus can draw music from his lyre*" (*Letter to Céline*). Nourished by these virtues during their student years, they will go forth strengthened for the labours, struggles, and perils of the apostolate. They will no longer feel, in dealing with souls, that they are left to poor shallow human resources which have merely an exterior effect.

To penetrate souls is a fine art indeed.

"'Before my profession,' relates a novice, 'I received through my saintly novice-mistress a very special grace. We had been washing all day. I was worn out with fatigue and

harassed with spiritual worries. That night, before meditation, I wanted to speak to her, but she dismissed me with the remark : " That is the bell for meditation, and I have not time to console you ; besides, I see plainly that it would be useless trouble. For the present God wishes you to suffer alone." I followed her to meditation so discouraged that, for the first time, I doubted my vocation. I should never be able to be a Carmelite. The life was too hard. I had been kneeling for some minutes when all at once, in the midst of this interior struggle—without having asked or even wished for peace—I felt a sudden and extraordinary change of soul. I no longer knew myself. My vocation appeared to me both lovely and lovable. I saw the sweetness and priceless value of suffering. All the privations and fatigues of the religious life appeared to me infinitely preferable to worldly pleasures, and I came away from my meditation completely transformed. Next day I told my mistress what had taken place, and, seeing she was deeply touched, I begged to know the reason. " God is good," she exclaimed. " Last evening you inspired me with such profound pity that I prayed incessantly for you at the beginning of meditation. I besought our Lord to bring you comfort, to change your dispositions, and show you the value of suffering. He has, indeed, heard my prayers " " " (*Counsels and Reminiscences*, p. 250).

If the generous apostles of our feverish age, instead of undertaking excessive labours that soon exhaust their bodily strength, and still more quickly their spiritual life,—instead of falling into discouragement before all that still remains to be done, would set aside some hours of their day in which to speak to God of the souls entrusted to them, doubtless they would make more headway at smaller cost. Truly the results do not seem to be in proportion to the efforts made. Is it not because these are more the work of man than the work of grace? " *Master, we have laboured all the night, and have taken nothing*"

(Luke v 5). This, indeed, is said, and with some discouragement, but without giving God time to say: "*Cast the net on the right side*" (John xxi 6)—that is, on the side of my omnipotence.

It must not be thought, however, that the young novice-mistress remained idle in the ecstasy of her contemplation.*

"Ever since I placed myself in the arms of Jesus I have been like a watchman on the lookout for the enemy from the highest turret of a fortified castle. Nothing escapes my vigilance; indeed, I am sometimes surprised at my own clear-sightedness. . . . I know, dear Mother, that your little lambs find me severe; if they were to read these lines they would say that, so far as they can see, it does not distress me to run after them, and show them how they have soiled their beautiful white fleece, or torn it in the brambles. Well, the little lambs may say what they like—in their hearts they know that I love them dearly; there is no fear of my imitating '*the hireling . . . who seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep, and flieth*' (John x 12). . . . Our Lord has granted me the grace never to fear the conflict; at all costs I must do my duty. . . ."

* Active work only hinders the souls not yet fixed in their centre. St Teresa of Avila explains this very clearly in the last chapter of her thoughts on the *Canticle of Canticles*, and in her *Life* (chapter xiii), where she shows the danger there is for a contemplative in distributing too soon the fruits of her prayer. The nearer Little Teresa came to the goal, the more readily she gave herself to her novices. This little incident is suggestive. "In the infirmary we scarcely waited for the end of her thanksgiving before seeking her advice. At first this somewhat distressed her, and she would make gentle reproaches, but soon she yielded to us, saying: 'I must not wish for more rest than our Lord. When he withdrew into the desert, after preaching, the crowds would come and intrude upon his solitude. Come, then, to me as much as you like; I must die sword in hand . . . "*the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.* . . ."

Yet this ardent zeal was so sweet, so discreet, so prudent.* It had all the qualities enumerated by St Paul in his description of charity (I Cor. xiii 4-7). Teresa among her novices, though hardly more than a child, had the wisdom of age, and she feared not, in her sublime and naïve humility, to apply to herself the words of the young David: "*I am young and despised . . . I have had understanding above old men, because I have sought thy commandments. Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths*" (Ps. cxviii 100, 105). "*I am ready and am not troubled, that I may keep thy commandments*" (v. 60).

"I see that all souls have more or less the same battles to fight, and on the other hand, that one soul differs widely from another, so each must be dealt with differently. With some I must humble myself, and not shrink from acknowledging my own struggles and defeats; then they confess more readily the faults into which they fall, and are pleased that I know by experience what they suffer. With others my only means of success is to be firm, and never go back

* She told Mother Agnes that if, after her death, young priests knew that she had been given as spiritual sister to two missionaries, they would probably ask the same favour. She warned her that this might become a great danger. "I am sure," she said, "that any one of us would write what I write, and would receive the same praise and the same confidence. But it is only by prayer and sacrifice that we can be of use to the Church." She insisted on this: "Mother, what I have just said is very important; I beg you not to forget it later. Correspondence ought to be very rare, and should not be allowed at all to some nuns who would become engrossed in it, and think they were doing marvels, while in reality they would only injure their souls, and perhaps fall into the cunning snares of the devil. At Carmel we must not coin false money to buy souls. . . . And fair words written and received are often only an exchange of false coin."

on what I have once said; self-abasement would be taken for weakness. . . . I have more than once been told: 'If you want me to obey, you must be gentle and not severe, otherwise you will gain nothing.' But no one is a good judge in his own case. During a painful operation a child will be sure to cry out and say that the remedy is worse than the disease; but if after a few days he is cured, then he is greatly delighted that he can run about and play. And it is the same with souls: they soon recognize that a little bitter is better than too much sweet, and they are not afraid to make the acknowledgement. Sometimes the change which takes place from one day to another is almost magical. A novice will say to me: 'You did well to be severe yesterday; at first I was indignant, but when I thought it all over, I saw that you were quite right. I left your cell thinking: "This ends it. I will tell our Mother that I shall never go to Sœur Thérèse again;" but I knew this was the devil's suggestion, and then I felt you were praying for me, and I grew calm. I began to see things more clearly, and now I come to you for further guidance.'

"I am only too happy to follow the dictates of my heart and hasten to console with a little sweetness, but I see that one must not press forward too quickly—a word might undo the work that cost so many tears. If I say the least thing which seems to tone down the hard truths of the previous day, I see my little Sister trying to take advantage of the opening thus given her. At once I have recourse to prayer, I turn to our blessed Lady, and Jesus always triumphs. Verily in prayer and sacrifice lies all my strength, they are my invincible arms; experience has taught me that they touch hearts far more easily than words (chapter x). . . . Kindness must not degenerate into weakness. When we have good reason for finding fault, we must leave it, and not allow ourselves to worry over having given pain. To seek out the delinquent for the purpose of consoling her is to do more harm than good. Left alone, she is compelled to look beyond creatures, and to turn to God; she is forced to see her faults and to humble herself. Otherwise she would become accustomed to expect consolation after a

merited rebuke, and would act like a spoilt child who stamps and screams, knowing well that by this means its mother will be forced to return and dry its tears" (*Counsels and Reminiscences*, p. 257).

What tact and self-mastery are here. This wisdom came to Teresa from the spirit of God by which she lived. Did she not say: "It is Jesus himself hidden in my poor heart, who is secretly at work inspiring me with what he wishes me to do as each occasion arises?" And she led each soul along the path pointed out by our Lord.

This peace and calm which never left her in her intercourse with the novices, supposes great purity of intention, and deep humility hidden behind this firmness. She practised in perfection these words of the *Imitation*: "He who neither desireth to please nor feareth to displease men shall enjoy much peace" (*Imit.*, Book III, 28).

"When staying with my aunt, while I was still a little girl, I was given a certain book to read. In one of the stories great praise was bestowed on a schoolmistress who, by her tact, escaped from every difficulty without hurting anyone's feelings. Her method of saying to one person: 'You are quite right,' and to another: 'You are not wrong,' struck me particularly, and as I read I reflected that I would not have acted in that way, because we should always tell the truth. And this I always do, though I grant it is much more difficult. It would be far less trouble for us, when told of a worry, to cast the blame on the absent. Less trouble . . . nevertheless I do just the contrary, and if I am disliked it cannot be helped. Let the novices not come to me if they do not want to learn the truth" (*Counsels and Reminiscences*, p. 256).

"By God's help, I have never tried to draw their hearts to myself, for I have always understood that my mission

was to lead them to him and to you, dear Mother, who on this earth hold his place in their regard, and whom, therefore, they must love and respect" (chapter x, p. 160).

Her apostolic ministry was always a pure labour of love; she sought herself in nothing: "Where a man seeketh himself," says the author of the *Imitation*, "there he falleth from love" (*Imit.*, III, 5).

"Rather than make one single reproach, I would prefer to receive a thousand, yet I feel that it is necessary that the task should cause me pain, for if I spoke only through natural impulse, then the soul in fault would not understand its defects. . . . But in this as in all else, I must practise sacrifice and self-denial. Even in the matter of writing a letter I feel that it will produce no fruit unless I am disinclined to write, and only do so from obedience. When conversing with a novice I am on the watch to mortify myself, and I avoid asking questions which would satisfy my curiosity. If she begins to speak on an interesting subject, and, leaving it unfinished, passes on to another that wearies me, I take care not to remind her of the interruption, for it seems to me no good can come of self-seeking" (chapter x, pp. 159-160).

If she sought anything after the glory of God, it was the bread of humiliation for herself.

"And now, dear Mother, I will tell you wherein I gain most with the novices. You know they are allowed without restriction to say anything to me, agreeable or the reverse; this is all the easier since they do not owe me the respect due to a novice-mistress. . . . At times my soul tires of this over-sweet food, and I long to hear something other than praise; then our Lord serves me with a nice little salad, well spiced, with plenty of vinegar—oil alone is wanting, and this it is which makes it more to my taste. And the salad is offered to me by the novices at the moment I least expect. God lifts the veil that hides my faults, and my dear little Sisters, beholding me as I really am, do not find me

altogether agreeable. With charming simplicity they tell me how I try them and what they dislike in me; in fact, they are as frank as though they were speaking of someone else, for they are aware that I am pleased when they act in this way. I am more than pleased—I am transported with delight by this splendid banquet set before me. How can anything so contrary to our natural inclinations afford such extraordinary pleasure? Had I not experienced it, I could not have believed it possible. One day when I was ardently longing for some humiliation, a young postulant came to me and sated my desire so completely, that I was reminded of the occasion when Semei cursed David, and I repeated to myself the words of the holy king: '*Yea, it is the Lord who hath bidden him say all these things*' (chapter x, pp. 164-165).

This little incident shows us that the saintly mistress was not always successful (I have read somewhere that that postulant did not make her profession). For us this is most fortunate, most comforting, and full of instruction, showing that true zeal does not feed upon evident success. Disinterested, humble zeal, such as little Teresa's, does not lay claim to success, but leaves that to God. In the apostolate, in self-devotion to others, this helps greatly to keep the soul in peace.

"I throw to my little birds on every side the good grain God puts into my hand, and then think no more of it. Sometimes it is as though I had given them nothing; at other times it does good; but God says to me: 'Give, give always, without troubling about the result'" (*Esprit*, p. 217).

This is lofty teaching put into childish words. It echoes St Thomas's masterly exposition of the divine disinterestedness in his treatise *On the Ways*

*of God.** This is zeal for souls which has reached the topmost step of love's ladder spoken of by St Teresa of Avila in her commentary on the *Canticle of Canticles*—where action and contemplation harmonize in apostolic souls rather as movement and rest are one in God.†

* Without looking to self-interest, without seeking to please men or fearing to displease them, without fixing our attention unduly upon present grace or future glory, let us consider purely and principally God's admirable goodness, and secondarily the salvation of our fellows. The more purely and ardently we look to God's glory and the less we regard our own advantage—or even that of other men—the more acceptable to God will our work be and the more fruitful to the whole universe of God's creation.

“How much is lost to God and the universe when, in our actions, we consider anything but the sheer goodness of God! God with his fan will separate the wheat from the chaff, as John the Baptist has said (Matt. iii 12). In his wisdom he will divide the pure from the impure, he will gather the grain into his barn, the chaff he will burn in unquenchable fire—that is to say, he will winnow our good deeds from our bad, and reward only what we have done or endured for his love only. ‘*The Lord will reward me according to his justice,*’ says David, ‘*and according to the cleanness of my hands before his eyes*’ (Ps. xvii 25)’ (*On the Ways of God*, opusc. lxii of St Thomas; translation of Fr. Bernard Delany, O.P.).

† “Such people serve God and do great good, yet I do not think that these are the flowers for which the Bride begs, but that she is petitioning for an intention of seeking solely for the honour and glory of God in all things. For truly, as I have seen in several cases, souls raised by him to this estate are as oblivious as if they no longer existed, of their own loss or gain. Their one thought is to serve and please God, for, knowing his love for his creatures, they delight in leaving their own comfort and advantages to gratify him by helping and teaching their neighbour in order that they may profit his soul. They never calculate as to whether they will lose by it themselves, but think about the welfare of others and of nothing else, forgetting themselves for the sake of God in order to please him better—and they will even lose their lives if need be, as did many of the martyrs. Their words are interpenetrated with this supreme love for God,

St Teresa never lost her serenity in the office of novice-mistress, wherein she gathered roses among many thorns; she was never discouraged when her zeal—although so well ordered—was unsuccessful. Her training of the novices does not appear to have produced any nuns of mark. If it did, God has so far hidden them, as he did their holy mistress. Her Mother Marie-Ange—“Teresa’s masterpiece,” Mother Isabelle du Sacré-Cœur—“the herald of Teresa,” the admirable and winning Mother Thérèse de l’Eucharistie, were not trained by her; they were her first conquests from heaven. This is a consoling fact. The Last Judgement alone will yield the true harvest of an apostolic life. There are failures which are a thousand times more fruitful than the most brilliant but brief successes. There are failures which wonderfully fertilize a neighbouring field, and prepare a rich harvest in the ages to come.

The magnanimous little Teresa was above desiring and enjoying personal success. Hers was a higher and wider outlook. In answer to a novice who said to her: “You are fortunate to be chosen to show others the way of childhood,” she replied:

“What if God does make use of me, rather than another, to procure his glory! Provided his kingdom be established among souls, the instrument does not matter. Besides, he has no need of anyone. Some time ago I was watching the flicker, almost invisible, of a tiny night-light, when one of

so that they never think, or if they think, they do not care, whether they offend men by what they say. Such people do immense good” (*Conceptions of the Love of God. Minor Works of St Teresa of Avila, chapter vii.*).

the Sisters drew near, and, lighting her candle in the dying flame, passed it round to light all those of the community. 'Who dare glory in his own good works?' I reflected. 'From one faint spark such as this, it would be possible to set the whole earth on fire.' We often think we receive graces and are illumined by means of brilliant candles. But from whence comes their light? From the prayers, perhaps, of some humble, hidden soul, whose inward shining is not apparent to human eyes; a soul of unrecognized virtue and, in her own sight, of little value—a dying flame.

"What mysteries will yet be unveiled to us! I have often thought that perhaps I owe all the graces with which I am laden to some little soul whom I shall only know in heaven.

"It is God's will that in this world souls shall dispense to each other, by prayer, the treasures of heaven, in order that when they reach their everlasting home they may love one another with grateful hearts, and with an affection far in excess of that which reigns in the most perfect family on earth. There no looks of indifference will meet us, because all the saints will be mutually indebted to each other. No envious glances will be cast, for the happiness of each one of the blessed will be the happiness of all. With the doctors of the Church we shall be like unto doctors; with the martyrs, like unto martyrs; with the virgins, like unto virgins; and just as the members of one family are proud of the other, so without the least jealousy shall we take pride in our brothers and sisters.

"When we see the glory of the great saints, and know that through the secret working of Providence we have contributed to it, who knows whether the joy we shall feel will not be as intense, perhaps sweeter, than the happiness they themselves possess? And do you not think that the great saints, on their side, seeing what they owe to all little souls, will love them with a love beyond compare? The friendships of Paradise will be both sweet and full of surprise, of this I am certain. The familiar friend of an Apostle, or of a great Doctor of the Church, may be a shepherd boy, and a simple little child may be united in closest intimacy with a Patriarch. . . . I long to enter that kingdom of love!" (*Counsels and Reminiscences*, pp. 232-234).

Did zeal ever appear in sweeter guise? It seems as though heaven were already opening for St Teresa. Yes, her soul was ready to "take its flight into the eternal embrace of merciful Love." The flame of zeal had consumed all that was opposed to beatific vision, and had finished its work in her. But her work in the souls of her brethren has hardly begun. She took with her to heaven her boundless apostolic desires: "I will spend my heaven in doing good upon earth. . . . There can be no rest for me until the end of the world. But when the angel shall have said: 'Time is no more!' then I shall rest, then I shall be able to rejoice, because the number of the elect will be complete."

FR. JÉRÔME DE LA MÈRE DE DIEU, O.C.D.

HER PROVIDENTIAL MISSION

ST TERESA OF THE CHILD JESUS has been called “a very modern saint.” Doubtless, in opposing by her life and ideas all that is most pernicious in the spirit of the age, she brings us from heaven help well-suited to the needs of the day, and in this sense certainly merits the title bestowed upon her.

Descartes and Rousseau are, each in his way, the fathers of the modern spirit. The great philosopher opened the sources of rationalism: he makes man a soul, and that soul an idea, but an idea separated from its connatural object and withdrawn besides from the principles of tradition and divine authority. The great romanticist has given us the natural man—a soul it may be, but all sense, immersed in the flesh, wherein it revels freely, having no law but self, and no measure but its desire. Thus on ruins of which the origin is often unknown and the extent unmeasured, the “modern spirit” is built up, leading us by all its contrary ways to one same summit of pride, to that boasted “autonomy” which makes of man a god without God. We are assured that not only is it impossible for man to be divinely raised to a knowledge and perfection above nature, but he can and *ought* of himself to attain by continual progress to the full possession of goodness and truth.* He ought! It would be beneath his

* Deinz., no. 1808.

dignity to degrade himself as a beggar before the Lord ; his bliss and glory must be the fruit of his own works. The Church has condemned these follies ; but she does not only condemn them, she comes to the rescue and repairs them. She opposes a remedy to the evil, and genius to genius. In these intellectual contests she gives us St Thomas as chief authority. His doctrine, declares the Pope, is the Church's own doctrine ; no other can avail like his to bring back to God the modern man, lost in an extravagant idealism, or, on the contrary, fascinated by an animal materialism. Consoling and far-reaching work is being done ; but for the multitude it remains indirect and as though unperceived. The happy effects of the return to thomism will but slowly make themselves felt among the faithful. We needed a teacher known and loved by all, a "little doctrine" understood by all ; and God, who is the Father of all, has raised up a child among us. He opposes our intellectual pride, complicated and obscure, with this luminous soul, transparent as a clear stream ; our moral pride, our self-sufficiency with this littleness,* this childhood, poor

* Let me remark at the outset the sense in which we must understand these expressions so often used by St Teresa : " littleness," " childhood," " little souls," " not to grow," " to become still less." Teresa did not want to remain little in perfection of holiness ; she desired to become a " great saint." But she understood that the most sublime holiness, which is a *supernatural* perfection, cannot be attained by human strength alone ; we need God's help. Our recourse to others is in proportion to the sense of our own weakness ; therefore, *to drain the resources of grace we must penetrate to the depths of our own helplessness.* This is the deep meaning which Teresa gives to

and destitute, which finds in God a Father, and in that Father every good. The reason the young Saint is so beloved, and why so many disciples follow in her wake, is that she comes from God, the angelic virgin beside the angelic Doctor, to open to us by her "little way" an inviting path to heaven, sure and rapid.* *Divinitus evehi*—to be divinely raised: this is what the pride of the great rejects, and the humility of the lowly desires; this is that secret of sanctity which God would teach us by St Teresa. For the young Saint comes to us with every mark of a providential mission. It is important, I think, first to show the signs which authenticate her mission; it will then be easier to

supernatural humility. St Thomas, speaking in the same sense, says it is not necessary to be "magnanimous" to become a great saint, for one who is magnanimous aims at great things in his own strength, while the saint hopes for a life wholly divine, but by God's grace.

* There is the most perfect harmony between the "great doctrine" of the Angelic Doctor and the "little doctrine" of the angelic nun, but besides this their souls are alike by an indefinable radiance as of childhood and the dawn. Might we not say of St Teresa in the midst of modern *savants*, what M. Jacques Maritain has written of St Thomas surrounded by the teachers of his time "eaten up with jealousy":

"Truly they have cause to be disconcerted, for he is not one of them. His wisdom has a higher source than theirs, in that virgin silence which is the mother of the word. *Nisi efficiamini sicut parvuli*. With all his learning, this great theologian (whose confession, as Friar Reginald bears witness, was like that of a child of five), by his simplicity—certainly not unarmed, but candid, natural and not acquired (*ex Deo nata*), humble and austere as innocence—was in the midst of them as one conformed to the image of the Child Jesus among the doctors."—*St Thomas apôtre des temps modernes* (*Revue des Jeunes*, mars, 1924, pp. 493-494).

emphasize the importance of her message by showing the summits of the "little way," and the chief means of attaining them.

I. THE SIGNS FROM GOD

We know the providential origin of *Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux*. It was written by obedience for the homelike intimacy of the cloister. We have been given a glimpse of this scene from convent life.

In the beginning of the year 1895, Teresa, at recreation, was relating her childhood's recollections to her Sisters. Her "little Mother" Pauline, Mother Agnes, was then Prioress. Sister Marie du Sacré Cœur, the eldest of the Martin sisters, delighted with the charm and holiness of these recollections, said to the Prioress: "You ought to make her write these things." The Abbé Ruel, who relates these reminiscences, continues: "Sister Teresa laughed without paying much heed, but the Prioress, yielding to the instances of the other Sisters, finally said: 'I order you to write down the recollections of your childhood, and give them to me next year for my feast.' . . . This was a command. As usual, Sister Teresa obeyed without asking further explanation, and wrote her recollections for *Mother Agnes alone*.* On January 20, 1896, before evening meditation, she knelt beside the Prioress and gave her the promised manuscript. Mother Agnes, her thoughts elsewhere, put it carelessly beside her stall and thought no more of it. She did not read it until

* This explains the extreme simplicity and familiar unconstraint which characterize the first eight chapters of *Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux*.

several weeks later, when a fresh election gave her more leisure by placing Mother Marie de Gonzague at the head of the community. Then Mother Agnes noticed that the story was incomplete, since it contained hardly anything on the writer's religious life. But now she was not Prioress, Mother Agnes had no longer the right to exact anything of Sister Teresa. . . . However, in June, 1897, seeing her little Sister fading away before her eyes, and realizing that it would soon be too late . . . she said to the Prioress: 'Sister Teresa will die before long, and you will have nothing to say about her in the circular letter to be sent to the Carmels. . . . Supposing you gave her the order to write about her religious life?' The very next morning the order was given, and Teresa, in a manuscript-book which she thought too good for the purpose, wrote down her thoughts, without much method but without any erasures, on such subjects as were suggested to her."*

The little Sister, scrupulously loyal, wrote her recollections without artifice for those who judged her, moreover, in the clear light of the frankest intimacy. She did not hide the wonders God wrought in her soul, neither did she exaggerate them. We have sure witnesses to her delicately conscientious sincerity.

* L'Abbé Ruel, *La Bienheureuse Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus: Sa valeur humaine*. *Édition des Cahiers catholiques*, p. 30. We must add a third to these two manuscripts; it was written, also by obedience, for Sister Marie du Sacré Cœur; it forms chapter xi of *l'Histoire*. The first manuscript contains chapters i-viii; the second, chapters ix and x. These two chapters were the last written by the saint.

She had at first no thought that her manuscript might be given to the world, but a few days after receiving the order from Mother Marie de Gonzague, something like a prophetic certainty became fixed in her mind. She was nearing the end of her exile; although her faith was in darkness, her little way shone clear. Teresa had rejoiced in teaching it to her novices; she wrote her final notes with the idea of drawing up a short treatise on spiritual childhood for her young Sisters. Finally our Lord showed her that her secret of sanctity was to rejoice a legion of little souls in the world, and she knew that her writings would be the instrument of her mission. This is revealed by several incidents.

In a conversation with her sister, Mother Agnes of Jesus, some time before her death, Teresa admitted "that her manuscripts might be published, *for it would reveal her way to others and help to do good.*"* This certainty grew stronger and clearer as she approached eternity. "The manuscript must be published without delay after my death," she said a little later, "*for the will of God will accomplish my mission, like Joan of Arc's, in spite of the envy of men.*" These words, spoken with great assurance, expressed what seemed a divinely founded certainty. "You think, then," said Mother Agnes of Jesus, "that it is by this manuscript you will do good to others?" "Yes,

* We borrow these and the following details from the very interesting articles published in *La Croix* by the Abbé Lepetit, professor at the Petit Séminaire of Caen. *La Croix* of November 25, 27 and 28, 1923.

Mother," answered the Saint, "it is a means God will use to grant my prayers: *it will do good to all kinds of people.*" She seemed already to see in the future the wonders God would grant her to work on earth after her death. One day, as her "little Mother" seemed sad at the thought of the near parting, Teresa whispered to her, with "a mysterious smile": "After my death, you will go to the letter-box and find comfort there." Again, when someone spoke to her of the sorrow that would break the heart of that dearly loved Sister, she affirmed quietly: "Don't worry! Mother Agnes of Jesus won't have time to think of her grief, for to the end of her life she will be so busy about me that she will not even be able to manage all the work." The soul of this child of benediction was uplifted by the certainty that she would make God loved as the most lovable of Fathers. She compared herself to Joan of Arc, saying: "I also am comforted by an interior voice. From above, the saints encourage me, saying: 'So long as thou art a captive in chains, thou canst not fulfil thy mission, but later on, after thy death, will come thy day of triumph.'" She possessed the certainty that from heaven she would "shower down graces with both hands." "In heaven," she said, "God will do all I desire, because on earth I have never done my own will." One day someone whispered to her: "You will look down on me from heaven, won't you?" "No, I will come down," she answered.*

* Everyone knows how this prophecy has been literally fulfilled beyond all that could have been imagined.

“My sword is love,” she wrote in an ardent prayer, “with it . . . I will drive the strangers from the land, and I will have thee proclaimed King over the kingdom of souls.” Joan of Arc inspired these thoughts; God gave her this assurance.*

I would neglect no ray of light which can be focussed upon this mission. Teresa’s most oft-quoted words have new meaning when replaced in their exact circumstances. On May 28, 1897, at the time when this supernatural light was dawning in her soul, she wrote to her “little Mother”: “You will understand how this evening the vessel of God’s mercy has overflowed for your child. . . . Even now I know it! Yea, all my hopes will be fulfilled. . . . Verily the Lord will work wonders for me, and they will infinitely surpass my boundless desires.”† She was sure that she would give us powerful help to walk in her “delightful way,” after she was “freed from this mortal body.”‡

Finally, everyone knows these words that came from her heart on July 17, 1897, as the testament of her love and the expression of her astonishing conviction: “I feel that my mission is soon to begin—my mission to make others love God as I love him . . . to teach souls my *little way*. I will spend my heaven in doing good upon earth. Nor is this impossible, for from the very heart of the beatific vision the angels keep watch over us. No, there can be no rest for me until the end of the world.” Someone asked: “And what is this *little way* that you

* *Prayers*, p. 316. The quotations are from *Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux*, except where otherwise noted.

† *Letters*, p. 289.

‡ *Letters*, French edition.

would teach to souls?" "It is the way of spiritual childhood, the way of trust and absolute self-surrender."*

We know how St Teresa has most faithfully kept her promises. Multitudes flock now to Lisieux as they do to Lourdes or Paray-le-Monial. England and America have become enthusiastic about the "little Flower" of Carmel. Cardinal Bourne recently said unhesitatingly that in the United Kingdom Lisieux is now as famous as Paris. The "little Saint" has made Carmels spring up in England "as though by magic." Prayers for the country's conversion will soon be rising from twenty Carmelite convents. Seventeen already exist. Forty years ago one alone sufficed for the number of vocations.† The prodigious circulation of *Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux*, the marvels wrought by the "little queen," her winsomeness, her smiles, her showers of roses, such numbers of conversions, and finally that efficacious enthusiasm which leads men to love God as she herself loved him, are indeed so many signs from heaven. Her miracles and favours fill six closely printed volumes, and how much unknown good she has done! Here, then, is God's seal upon the page wherein the apostle of love has written her mission; if any doubt remain, the word of the Pope conclusively enlightens us.

Benedict XV, in his discourse of August 14, 1921,

* *Epilogue*, pp. 212-213.

† These numbers are incorrect. Forty years ago there were already several Carmelite convents in England. The writer refers perhaps to those following the rule of the French Congregation, which have multiplied so marvellously since the first was founded from France at Notting Hill.—TRANSLATORS.

after the reading of the decree affirming Ven. Teresa's virtues to be heroic, made the following solemn declaration: "Since Sister Teresa had been so humble all her life, it could only have been *by a divine inspiration* that she spoke in her last moments in an apparently contrary sense. . . . In the concrete case of Sister Teresa we may well see *God's special design to exalt the merits of spiritual childhood*. . . . A glance over the times in which she lived would almost authorize the affirmation that she had this mission: *ut destrueret inimicum et ultorem*. But she could not possibly have fulfilled it without the worldwide circulation of her auto-biography."*

According to the idea of the Pontiff, "spiritual childhood" is not an optional means, a better, or shorter, or easier way; it is "*the necessary condition for gaining eternal life*"; "*the faithful of all nations . . . should enter courageously upon this way* by which Teresa of the Child Jesus attained heroic virtue." In his enthusiasm, the "Christ on earth" declared that, "There is no one now who, knowing the life of 'little Teresa,' does not join in the wonderful chorus hymning this life characterized throughout by the merits of spiritual childhood: *there lies the secret of sanctity*." "We wish," he said again, "*that Sister Teresa's secret of sanctity should be made known to every one of our children*." The way she opens to us is accessible to all, easy for all: it is the "true way of salvation." "The doctrinal fulness of this discourse," remarks Cardinal Vico, "leads to the belief that the

* Promulgation of the Decree.

supreme head of the Church wished to bequeath this way of evangelical childhood as a spiritual testament to all his children.”*

His Holiness Pope Pius XI invites us, in his turn, to hear “what ‘little Teresa,’ *who has been made a word from God*, would say to us.”† He sees, in the astonishing promotion of this cause, a special design of the most loving God who has taken pity on us. Seeing how great is our forgetfulness of heavenly things, our disregard of the supernatural, the pride of our age, which ignores, or pretends to ignore, that the Church is “the mother of holiness,” it has pleased God to give us a virginal mistress of spiritual childhood. “*We have set her before the children of the Church*,” says the Pope, “*as a striking and most precious example.*”‡

Is there anyone in the Church who does not rejoice to hear the Popes speak so clearly concerning God’s designs for us? Since this angelic nun has been made “*a word from God*,” should we not open trustfully and lovingly, *with an earnest goodwill*, the book in which it is her mission—received “from the King of heaven”—to teach us her secret of sanctity?

Undoubtedly, nothing can replace meditation on her illuminating thoughts, which seem dictated by the Holy Ghost. Teresa, however, wrote at random, letting her pen run on, and pouring out her heart.

* *L’Esprit de la Bienheureuse Thérèse de l’Enfant Jésus.*
Preface by Cardinal Vico, p. III.

† *Ibid.*, p. 3.

‡ *Letter of His Holiness Pope Pius XI to Cardinal Vico,*
A.A.S., p. 283.

Her mission was not to give us learned treatises, because "little souls" could not have imitated her in this. She tells us simply, in a flood of memories, her experience of the divine gifts; and in this account it is necessary to make some distinction, lest souls of goodwill, confusing the heights with the path which leads to them, should be discouraged at finding they do not at once reach that degree of sanctity which the young Carmelite seems to have attained from her earliest years.

We must not be deceived by our perspectives. The love of an ideal is rapidly conceived. We read the marvellous history of a soul in which God seems to dwell transparently; we admire Teresa's simplicity, the ease of her virtues, her gay heroism. All is done with such grace that everything seems within easy reach in this life apparently like to ours, and we already imagine ourselves with a few good desires to be "little saints." . . . Experience soon undeceives us, and we see that it is not so easy to imitate our model. We discover those heights of love whither Teresa would lead us to be unexpectedly elevated, and an astonishing wealth in that unpretentious simplicity; we are disturbed, grow tired, and despair of attaining such perfection. We have not realized that the heights are at the journey's end, and that their attainment will be the reward of a patient fidelity which has borne the weariness of the way. We must, therefore, take the means to attain the end, and must first distinguish them so as to ascertain their necessary order.

II. THE SUMMITS OF THE WAY OF SPIRITUAL CHILDHOOD

Sanctity is obviously the end set before us in the "little way," but a sanctity *accessible to all* and yet *sublime*.

God tells us clearly that we are all called to become saints. We should meditate on the solemn words of the holy Father interpreting our Lord's designs: "Christ has made the Church holy and the source of holiness," declares Pius XI, "and it is the divine will that all those who take her as guide and mistress must strive after holiness of life: '*This is the will of God*,' says St Paul, '*your sanctification*.' What kind of holiness? Our Lord himself tells us: '*Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect*.' Let no one think that this invitation is addressed to a small and very exclusive number, and that it is permissible for the rest to remain in a lower degree of virtue. It is clear that this law obliges absolutely everybody without any exception: *tenentur enim hac lege, ut patet, omnino omnes, nullo excepto.*'**

There is then a common sanctity to which we are all called, and should therefore all aspire. There is no pride in desiring it, since God enjoins it, no presumption in pursuing it, since to obtain it we count on our Lord's help and not on ourselves; yet we must seek it energetically, since perfection is in itself difficult—in fact, it is a summit. Sanctity is

* Encycl. *Rerum omnium* written for the third centenary of St Francis de Sales. *Acta Apost. Sedis*, February, 1923, p. 50.

not made easy and attractive by being lowered to our mediocre standards. God is a supreme splendour of life, intelligence and love, and we cannot enter the Father's house unless we are like to his Son, for we are "predestined to be made conformable to his image." Teresa clearly contemplated and defined these summits of the spirit, but her stroke of genius was to see perfection *in its pure essence*, to distinguish its intrinsic nature, and to show us, both by her teaching and her life, that *common sanctity* which all Christians should acquire according to their state and the measure of their graces.

So many Christians, seeing sanctity accompanied by *extraordinary deeds*, possible only to heroes, think that it belongs only to great souls, to the *magnanimous*; often also they confound it with graces *gratis datae*, with visions, prophecy, or the gift of miracles. They imagine the saints only in ecstasy, in dramatic attitudes, or bending over the dead to raise them to life; the possibility of living with God in a union of perfect charity, while leading an apparently ordinary life, never enters their minds. In St Teresa, God has given them a striking example of heroic sanctity, *of the greatest sanctity in the simplest of lives*.

Holiness consists, in fact, specially and chiefly in perfect charity; and we can attain this perfection without extraordinary graces, without *charismata*, and even without *great works*, in remaining, if you will, "little souls." This is what St Teresa's whole life teaches us.

Neither let us consider whether our circumstances

are as favourable as hers for attaining the fulness of virtue, or whether we have the same means of victory. We have here an ideal of perfection attained by a common way. Everything in her life was simple and commonplace, except for the ecstasy which marked the end of a purification, and, in her last days, the certainty of her mission to teach little souls an ordinary sanctity. It is delightful to read the pages in which her companions describe this simplicity.* By this must be understood an uneventful life, where all seems to take a tranquil daily course. It is truly said: "Have many souls . . . understood the lessons of Nazareth as she did, and was she not destined to make the track of the 'narrow way' still clearer by her life, which was so ordinary yet one of supernatural and sustained fidelity?"† Ah, yes, to grasp fully the mind of little Teresa we must go to the poor home of Nazareth. What work could be humbler than the labours of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in the carpenter's shop? And yet what sanctity was comparable to theirs, even at the time when their life appeared outwardly so ordinary? Teresa of the Child Jesus was, indeed, like to the Child Jesus; she was conformed to the image of the Son. Let us follow the humble course of her life: no one praised her intelligence or

* *L'Esprit de la Bienheureuse Thérèse de l'Enfant Jésus, d'après ses écrits et les témoins oculaires de sa vie.* Lisieux, Office centrale de la Bse Thérèse, 46, rue Livarot. The meditation of these pages, where the spirit of the saint is brought out still more clearly by the order followed, cannot be too strongly recommended. See chapter ii, art. ii, *La simplicité, cachet distinctif de la Bienheureuse Thérèse.*

† *L'Esprit*, p. 164.

singled her out from her school-fellows; at Carmel some of the Sisters refused her their votes; the ecclesiastical superior in accepting her professed that he did so "out of obedience to the Bishop," but added: "I hope the community will not have to repent later of having received so young a postulant."* "Like St John of the Cross, who was said by several of his contemporaries to be an 'extraordinarily ordinary religious,' Teresa was so hidden, so little thought of in her monastery, that certain Sisters, when she was ill, wondered what they would find to write about her after her death."†

This simplicity enveloped everything; inwardly as well as outwardly, her life was quite ordinary; she reached sublime heights by the "common way." The virtues of mind and will attained their perfection without display, without ecstasies, without visions or revelations, without even the gladdening consciousness of a fruitful interior life. "I have never desired extraordinary graces," she said. This was the purity of love in the darkness of faith. "Jesus, as was his wont, slept in my little barque," and, "I no longer knew if I were beloved by God."‡ Do you think she was filled with consolations? "For me it is still deep night." "It is not a veil—it is a wall which rises to the very heavens and shuts out the starry sky."§ She was sharing the experiences of St Teresa of Avila and St John of

* *L'Esprit*, pp. 165-166.

† *Ibid.*, p. 126. An allusion to the biographical note circulated among the convents of the Order after a Carmelite's death.

‡ *Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux*, chapter viii.

§ *Ibid.*, chapter ix, p. 142.

the Cross, it may be, but she did not know it. She did not feel sure of the morrow, nor rich in "provisions," and set as though by miracle on an undeviating way to heaven; she "sang only what she wished to believe"; she had no special insight, "no gift of reading souls." She said with a sigh towards the end of her life: "O Mother, no, I assure you, I have no special insight! I know only what you know. I divine nothing except by what I see and feel, as you do. If you only knew my poverty!"* The certainty of hope kept her in peace, and yet she was deprived of a director, like so many other souls, and misunderstood by everyone except her "little Mother," to whom she could not talk. She had Jesus alone for Teacher, but the teaching of such a Master came to her as to us through the Gospel, the voice of the Church, and the lessons of daily trials—there were no interior words, no flashes of light, but an astonishingly simple and courageous study of the divine meaning of Scripture. The rays of the gift of Understanding flooded her mind, she judged everything by this light, with an exquisite sense of the things of God, but without feeling the joy of seeing, without knowing that she knew, so to speak; and, apart from some brief periods of light, she travelled through an "underground passage." Theologians will see in this darkness a lofty degree of the spiritual life, but of this Teresa saw nothing; to her everything seemed commonplace and poor, and it was necessary that it should be so.

There was the same poverty in her heart, in those virtues which are under love's dominion, and which

* *Esprit*, p. 168.

require fortitude. Her generosity was at first ambitious of heroism, and the penances of the saints; but she fell ill from wearing too long a time a little iron cross, and this experience taught her a secret. "Such a trifle would not have caused this," she said afterwards, "if God had not wished thus to make me understand that the greater austerities of the saints are not meant for me."^{*} Some people think perfection lies in sacrifice, in bitterness, in dust and ashes; and undoubtedly suffering is the condition of our earthly life, but these conditions and means are not holiness. The "little queen," who made it a principle that "*we should go to the end of our strength before we complain*," saw in the end that it was simpler . . . to thank God for what she found to her taste, instead of refusing it or making it bitter.[†] She even advised moderation in penances "because there is often more of nature than of virtue in them."[‡] She suffered much, but from trials God sent her in the common course of events, and which she welcomed with a fidelity that was simply heroic. She loved those saints who lived "quite an ordinary life," in no way inimitable, but sanctified by hidden virtues. "Such holiness," she said, "seems to me the most true, the most holy; it is the holiness I desire, for it is free from all illusion."[§] Our Lady especially delighted her, because God's Mother was the simplest, and in some sense the most imitable, of perfect souls.

This characteristic of simplicity, which made

* *Epilogue*, p. 200.

† *Esprit*, p. 181.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

§ Chapter viii, pp. 123-124.

Teresa's the most ordinary of lives, was not an *accidental* trait of her holiness: she knew that the multitude of souls called to the perfection of love must travel by these common paths. She walks at their head, and shows them, in God's name, how they may reach heaven without much display. A novice, allowed to share the secret of Teresa's life of love, one day hazarded the suggestion: "You have loved God so much that he will work a miracle for you, and we shall find your body incorrupt." "Oh no! not that miracle!" she answered quickly. "That would be to stray away from my little path of humility, and *little souls must not find anything in me to be envied.*"* When she discovered that the penances of the saints were not for her, she knew that it was because God willed that everyone should be able to imitate her; all that she could do must be also within the power of the "*little souls who walk in the path of spiritual childhood, where nothing is out of the common.*"† "Die on the Feast of the Assumption!" she said again, "that would not be like my little way; would you have me leave it at my death?" And again: "Die of love after Holy Communion! Upon a great feast! Nay, not so. *In my 'little way' everything is most ordinary; all that I do, little souls must be able to do likewise.*"‡

These clear declarations suffice. They teach that holiness must be an everyday holiness, so to speak, which remains within the round of our commonplace duties, which keeps us entirely in our humble place—

* *Esprit*, p. 167.

† *Esprit*, p. 180.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 183; cf. *Epilogue*, p. 213.

our own place in the universal order—a holiness that walks beside us in the streets and highways, in the office, the factory or the shop, which lives and journeys on to heaven, hidden and unknown like ourselves, and which God alone sees and blesses.

Shall we, then, reach the Kingdom of God by a niggardly mediocrity of virtue? No! Holiness is a sublime perfection, simple, it may be, but simple in purity, in fulness, in harmony, and not in emptiness and mediocrity. The “common way” must lead us to the highest summits of life.

By simplicity, some people understand the easy following of their natural inclinations and the whims of their temperament; they think they are simple because they give themselves successively and entirely to their manifold and varying impulses, but without mastering them and reducing them to the form of the virtues, to the perfect integrity and unity of divine love. Their life is a moral mosaic, a jig-saw of thoughts and affections, a thread which tangles as it unrolls, a sequence of a sort, in which all seems simple because all is empty, because all goes at random, according to the fancy of the moment.

The simplicity of the saints lies in purity, fulness, harmony. Their virtues are purified from their dross, their useless complications, their hesitations and evasions; they have overcome the resistance of natural imperfection; they have hollowed out the way to their goal, and flow like a tranquil stream that carries fruitfulness and well-being in its course. We hear indeed the praises of St Teresa’s

“naturalness, and ease” in being always “joyous, charitable, thoughtful for others; thus arousing admiration for what no one realized to be the supreme degree of perfection in which the work of grace seems the development of nature.” She did everything “with a gay sweetness which led to the mistaken idea that she had nothing to overcome.”* This is pure virtue, where nothing is left of the contrary fault, a virtue completely triumphant; its whole beauty is in its unsullied brightness. This is also the perfect *fulness* of virtue. See how skilfully this “little queen” guides her chariot, the four cardinal virtues to the fore, and all the forces they command ranged behind them, each in its place, acting in its turn at the right time. What humble virtue is missing? Where is a defect? Where the act, however small, which does not go, in well-directed flight, straight to its immediate and to its ultimate end? And all is in such unison, so merged in a single movement of majestic sweetness, that we are surprised to see the most opposite virtues in perfect harmony—magnanimity and lowliness, fortitude and meekness, justice and mercy, prudence and straightforwardness, austerity and kindness. Here, then, consisting in the most ordinary virtues, is a perfection which rises to the very heavens, visible only to God and the angels, and in which all is so pure, so facile, so sublime, so dazzling to the soul’s vision, that we should perforce despair of attaining this summit did we not possess the divine principle which is the soul of this perfection. This principle

* *Esprit*, p. 174.

which unites all the virtues and gives them their freedom, their splendour and their whole value, by directing them all to God, is charity—"the bond of perfection," as the apostle says. *Holiness consists, as I have said, specially and chiefly in charity;* it is like the keystone holding together the four groins of an arch and all the masonry it supports. Take away charity, and everything falls; the whole totters if charity be not steadfast, its role is essential and final. It corresponds to the two great precepts which contain the whole law and the prophets, and which are the end of all the commandments and counsels: "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.*"* St Paul says in substance, whatever you may have or be, if you have not charity you are nothing, but if you have charity, though you be otherwise nothing, you are everything in the order of salvation.†

St Teresa is a winning and happy example of this primary truth. She became, as Pius X said, "the greatest saint of modern times," by devoting her whole soul to love. She is a "heroine of sanctity,"‡ by this chief perfection of charity, which rose, in her apparently most ordinary life, to incomparable heights. Let us study the special genius of the little Sister, and the lofty flight of her soul.

Charity, incontestably, contains all the virtues; perfect charity contains them in perfection. So that

* Luke x 27.

† Cf. 1 Cor. xiii 1.

‡ Pius XI.

there is no good deed, however heroic, that charity would not wish to do for God. But man's forces being limited, "little souls" especially cannot seek after all the works to which charity aspires; they must choose one special end, and direct all their efforts towards it. Teresa made her choice. She understood that the soul of all the virtues is charity, from which they derive their life and their whole value; seeing that charity is thus more precious than anything else, this child of genius chose for her part *the very act of love*, which she made the primary act of her whole life.

St Thomas teaches that only in heaven will charity be absolutely perfect, when the soul will be resolved into an unchangeable act of love. This act will be unique, eternal, boundless. On earth we cannot attain this fulness; sleep, the business of life, our distractions and faint-heartedness, necessarily hinder actual love; yet since perfection in this life is the beginning of heavenly perfection, we must strive to "live by love" as uninterruptedly as possible that we may reach sanctity.

Now, there are necessarily two parts in our spiritual life: on the one hand, all the duties of the active life, and on the other, those of the contemplative life. So that to live by love we must "*do all for love*," and for this the act of charity must be the centre of all other operations. Thus the active life, which especially regards our fellow-men, becomes a continual exercise of fraternal charity, and the contemplative life, which chiefly regards God, a constant exercise of the love of God. The "little saint"

had a wonderful understanding of this law. More than this: she put love—and what is most perfect, *love in operation*—before everything. She neglected nothing which the perfection of the sublimest charity demands, but, urged by the heroic aspiration to concentrate all her heart's strength, she held only to what was “necessary for love,” as a poor man keeps only what is “necessary for life”; for she had a wonderfully clear understanding that to love God with *all our strength* is better than anything else, and preferable even to martyrdom, for martyrdom without love (if such could be) would be worthless: “*If I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing,*” says St Paul. Little Teresa, seraph-like, wished “to give God nothing but love.” She saw so clearly that God is not loved, although he asks of us nothing but love. “Jesus does not ask for great deeds,” she said, “but only for gratitude and self-surrender,”* which are the expressions of love. “Our Lord . . .” she insisted, “has need of our love—he has no need of our works. The same God, who declares that he has no need to tell us if he be hungry, did not disdain to beg a little water from the Samaritan woman. He was athirst, but when he said: ‘Give me to drink,’ he, the Creator of the universe, asked for the love of his creature. He thirsted for love.”† The divine Heart is not understood: “Amongst the disciples of the world he meets with nothing but indifference and ingratitude, and, alas! *among his own, how few hearts surrender themselves without*

* Chapter xi, p. 178.

† *Ibid.*

reserve," or have a deep understanding of that petition he is still making to each of us: Abide in my love, manete in dilectione mea?* Do we really consider the claims of his Heart over ours, his soul's delicate and supreme exigencies, the desires of this blessed Redeemer who loved us and gave himself for us, and who, at the right hand of his Father, is making intercession for us at this very moment, incessantly busied about our salvation, *semper interpellans pro nobis?*

Teresa penetrated deeply into this mystery of a God begging for love, and when she would express the whole secret of her inmost soul it is to Jesus she speaks, as though he alone could understand, because it was of him alone that she had learnt it: "Like thee, O adorable Spouse, I would be scourged, I would be crucified! I would be flayed alive like St Bartholomew, plunged into boiling oil like St John, or, like St Ignatius of Antioch, ground by the teeth of wild beasts into a bread worthy of God. With St Agnes and St Cecilia I would offer my neck to the sword of the executioner, and like Joan of Arc I would murmur the name of Jesus at the stake. My heart thrills at the thought of the frightful tortures Christians are to suffer at the time of Anti-christ, and I long to undergo them all. Open, O Jesus, the book of Life, in which are written the deeds of thy saints: all the deeds told in that book I long to have accomplished for thee."† The daring little Sister stops short; her desires are a torture, a "true martyrdom," and yet what is she? "Is there

* Chapter xi, p. 178.

† *Ibid.*, p. 182.

on the face of this earth a soul more feeble" than hers? Can she then satisfy her boundless ambition? As though consumed with anguish, she seeks a way to satisfy her heart. The apostle then "explains how all perfect gifts are nothing without love, that charity is the most excellent way of going surely to God." At last she had found rest! "Charity provided me with the key to *my vocation*. I understood that since the Church is a body composed of different members, the noblest and most important of all the organs would not be wanting. I knew that the Church has a heart, that this heart burns with love, and that it is love alone which gives life to its members. I knew that if this love were extinguished the apostles would no longer preach the Gospel, and the martyrs would refuse to shed their blood. *I understood that love embraces all vocations, that it is all things*, and that it reaches out through all the ages, and to the uttermost limits of the earth, because it is eternal. Then, beside myself with joy, I cried out: 'O Jesus, my Love, at last I have found my vocation. *My vocation is love!* Yes, I have found my place in the bosom of the Church and this place, O my God, thou hast thyself given to me: in the heart of the Church, my Mother, *I will be love!* . . . *Thus I shall be all things*; thus will my dream be realized. . . .'"* Teresa constantly returns to this primary truth, which inspires her whole teaching: "O my God, I know it—'Love is repaid by love alone.' Therefore, I have sought, I have found, how to ease my heart by rendering

* Chapter xi, pp. 182-184 *passim*.

thee love for love."* "I ask for love. To love thee, Jesus, is now my only desire. Great deeds are not for me; I cannot preach the Gospel or shed my blood. No matter! . . . I, a little child, stay close to thy throne, and love thee for all who are in the strife."† She remembers that the *least act of pure love* is of more value to the Church than all works together; and her thought here becomes that of St Paul, St Augustine, St Thomas and Pascal. "All material bodies, the heavens and the stars, the earth and its kingdoms, are of less value than the least of created intelligences; for it knows all this and itself besides, and material bodies know nothing. All material things and all created intelligences, together with all that they produce, are worth less than the smallest act of charity; for this is of an infinitely higher order."

Teresa had thus found the precious pearl of which Jesus speaks; and she sold all she had to buy it. For her, all perfections are summed up in one—the very act of love; to acquire this divine form of charity is to have all the virtues which it inspires, rules and commands. Teresa could find no rest save on this height, which is God loved in and for himself, in the irrevocable gift of the soul consecrated to the "good pleasure of Jesus."

On this the act of oblation throws full light: a victim of holocaust, little Teresa desired to live as far as this life allows, *in an act of perfect love*; to make this act *as continuous as possible* she desired *at every beat of her heart* "to renew this oblation an

* Chapter xi, p. 184.

† Chapter xi, p. 185.

infinite number of times"; to be "*unceasingly consumed*" so as to become a very martyr.

Devoted primarily to this vocation of love, she consented to be despoiled of all that is not necessary to charity, and in this sense we must interpret certain passages where St Teresa speaks of works, not in the same sense as Protestants or Quietists, but like St Paul. If God has no need of our works or of our praise, "*but only of our love*," we must understand that charity has the supremacy over all our actions, and does not necessarily require this or that great deed, nor even great desires, except the great desire of loving God above all things. The ultimate disposition of the perfect is a state of love which detaches them from all that is earthly, and makes them cleave only to God and divine things, arousing a passionate desire "*to be dissolved and to be with Christ*." Teresa thus interprets the apostle's thought: "*Dear Mother, it seems to me that at present there is nothing to impede my upward flight, for I have no longer any desires save to die of love for him. . . . I am free, I fear nothing now.*"*

In this life, however, charity admits the necessary workings of faith and hope, together with the other moral virtues, according to the requirements of every-day duties; *love must be proved*, but for its perfect proof, the Saint insists, *nothing is needed but love's*

* Chapter ix, p. 142. The ninth and tenth chapters were written a little later than chapter xi. We must notice this order if we would keep rigorous account of the saint's psychological development.

own perfection and that of the ordinary virtues. "How shall I show my love, since love proves itself by deeds? Well, *the little child will strew flowers.* . . . Yea, my Beloved, it is thus my short life shall be spent in thy sight. The only way I have of proving my love is to strew flowers before thee—that is to say, *I will let no tiny sacrifice pass, no look, no word.* *I wish to profit by the smallest actions, and to do them for love.* *I wish to suffer for love's sake, and for love's sake even to rejoice.* Thus shall I strew flowers. Not one shall I find without scattering its petals before thee . . . and I will sing . . . I will sing always, even if my roses must be gathered from amidst thorns; and the longer and sharper the thorns, the sweeter shall be my song."*

These are heights of which the cloud-veiled summits can only be contemplated in the light of faith and the gift of Wisdom. In childish terms, comprehensible to "little souls," and under simple imagery, the little Carmelite has expressed thoughts which bear comparison with the most lofty teaching: she understood the Gospel as did St Paul, St Augustine, St Thomas, and St Teresa of Avila.

It must be clearly understood that these heights are at the end of the "way of spiritual childhood": to attain them we must follow the path with the same humility and courageous confidence as Teresa. It is a long and sometimes wearisome journey, but God upholds us. The divine help will never be wanting; the great thing is to appeal to it—and here again the "little Saint" has her secrets.

* Chapter xi, pp. 185-186.

III. ST TERESA'S SECRET OF SANCTITY

St Teresa has thus simplified the ideal of sanctity, reducing it to its simplest and essential elements—the union of the ordinary supernatural virtues raised to their perfection by a sublime charity. The ways leading to this summit must be proportioned and adapted to the end; a simplified ideal needs a corresponding method of sanctification equally simplified. Having realized that perfection consists chiefly in charity, and notably in the *act of love*, the Saint made progress in the spiritual life a progress in love. In this sense she could say: “You ask me the means to attain perfection; I know but one, love.” But we must understand this formula—and, above all, how to apply it—aright.

Charity, in itself, is essentially one, but we may possess it in different degrees, rather as the heat of the fire may more or less penetrate a mass of iron. St Thomas and theologians in general distinguish three kinds of charity: initial charity—given us with sanctifying grace—progressive, and perfect charity. The last lies at the summit; it is an end, and cannot be a means. Initial charity is the starting-point, and all who would attain to God must first be and keep themselves in a state of grace. Progressive charity lies especially in the ordering of the means to holiness; by love’s increase we attain to love’s perfection.

Teresa grasped this thoroughly. She understood, first of all, that charity can grow indefinitely and that our desire to love God must have no limits.

We rise to God, not by bodily leaps and bounds, but by the ascent of the soul, "by the steps of love," *gressibus amoris*. Nothing can stay this great and glorious ascent. God is its infinite end and its almighty cause which nothing can resist; and our very capacity for love is unbounded, because in proportion to the growth of charity we become more and more apt for its exercise: "*quia semper charitate ex crescente, semper excrescit habilitas ad ulterius augmentum*" (IIa IIae, Q. 24, Art. 7).*

St Teresa had a vivid sense of this truth: "Charity alone," she said, "can make wide the heart. . . . O Jesus, since its sweet flame has consumed my heart, *I have run with delight in the way of thy new commandment. I desire to run therein to my life's end. . . .*" "Thy love has gone before me, even from the days of my childhood. *It has grown with my growth, and now it is an abyss whose depths I cannot fathom.* Love attracts love; mine darts towards thee, and would fain make the abyss brim over, but alas! it is not even as a dewdrop in the ocean."

But how bring about this progress in charity? We must not rest content with intentions—good but ineffectual: here practical means are essential. Little Teresa took the most direct, the shortest, the surest, and even the easiest. She believed firmly that God creates charity and sets it in motion; and she yielded herself heroically to the divine working.

Divine love can grow only in purity of heart

* His Holiness Pius XI solemnly praises this doctrine of St Thomas in his Encyclical *Studiorum ducem*.

and the practice of virtue—it necessarily implies avoidance of sin, the combating of imperfections, and fidelity in every duty. But there are two ways of undertaking this spiritual work. Some conceive of this moral development, not as a vigorous organic life, divinely ordered and informed,* but like the rising of a building, stone by stone. They want each day to have a fault overcome or a virtue won—a tedious and practically endless task which often ends in nothing but a soulless mechanism, a mere round of exercises. Teresa set to work differently. “*She did not regard the virtues as leading to love; but, on the contrary, made all her perfection the outcome of love.*” She remembered the answer in the Catechism: ‘God made me to know him, love him and serve him.’ And it was by first loving him that she came afterwards to serve him so well.† When someone said to her: ‘You must have had a hard struggle to overcome yourself so perfectly,’ she answered with an indescribable accent: ‘Oh no! It is not that.’”‡ And in a letter of 1895: “Some directors, I know, advise counting our acts of virtue to advance in perfection; but my director, who is Jesus, does not teach me to count my acts; *he teaches me to do everything for love.*”§

This method, very broad in itself, needs applying with the nicest delicacy, to each successive action; otherwise it remains ineffectual. We know how Teresa did all for love; her fidelity to the smallest

* “*Une poussée de vie organisée sous l’empire d’une forme.*”

† *Esprit de la Bienheureuse Thérèse de l’Enfant Jésus*, p. 3.

‡ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

duties was simply heroic. She loved these trifling restrictions, "which are a martyrdom by pin-pricks," and multiplied in surprising numbers "those little acts of hidden virtue," which "give such peace to the soul." She was an angel of patience, and the most hostile attitudes found her always in the serenity of a peace acquired by virtue. No detail of the rule, nor its least prescriptions ever appeared to her negligible. One night she was seen to put a penknife outside her door because it did not figure in the list of things permitted to be kept in the cell. This was not narrow pettiness, but a finished delicacy of conscience in this childlike soul, simple and luminous. She was strongly convinced that we are the children of God our Father, and that we should offer him only perfect proofs of our love if it be sincere.

But because the perfection of charity lies especially in the act of love, Teresa strove chiefly and directly to multiply, intensify and purify this act. For "charity increases only by its subject partaking of charity more and more—*i.e.*, by being more reduced to its act and more subject thereto."* Her desires and efforts all tended to this end: *to be more and more reduced to the act of love, to be ever more and more efficaciously dominated thereby, and so ascend continuously towards the "summits of the mountain of love."*

But to acquire love without measure, is it enough

* IIa IIae, Q. 24, Art. 5: "Sic ergo charitas augetur solum per hoc quod subjectum magis participat charitatem: id est secundum quod magis reducitur in actum illius, ac magis subdetur illi."

to make all our desires tend towards it? For us who are so carnal, and naturally drawn to the accessible joys of earth, is it not the most difficult thing in the world to love an invisible God—to love him with a supernatural, generous, and self-sacrificing love? "Do you love God, you whose hearts were made only to love him, as your minds were made only to know him? I do not ask whether you love him with a deep and tender love better than your dearest friends, better than a mother loves her son, better than all things and yourselves—not from seeing the visible creation of which he is the author, but from the anticipated contemplation of his personal beauty . . . but do you love him the least in the world? Do your thoughts ever turn to him? Do you take some secret pleasure in him? Is he a part, however small, of your heart's treasure? I will be so bold as to say no, and that you are more moved by a leaf whirling in the wind of an autumn evening than by the immensity of the divine perfections."* These words of Lacordaire will find an echo in every soul unvisited or forsaken by grace. No one understood better than Teresa this radical weakness of our heart, and that is why no one was better able to love God; for she made her very littleness the source of her greatness. Here her secret begins; she has summed it up in two words—*trust* and *self-surrender*.

Supernatural confidence is a hope founded on a firm faith, from which it draws all its strength. Faith teaches us that the divine goal of our destiny

* Third Conference of Lacordaire, March 11, 1849.

is supernatural, that it infinitely surpasses the exigencies, aspirations and forces of our nature, and that we are therefore radically incapable of attaining God without help proportionate to our end. Teresa sounded the depths of this truth, nor did she forget it in her spiritual life. She knew that sanctity is not accessible to the *magnanimous* who aim after great things in their own strength alone, but to the *little* and humble, who aspire to perfect love by the divine power—for our upraising is more an assumption than an ascension. Only by God do we attain God; we rise, to use Teresa's lowly simile, by "the divine lift" which is "the arms of Jesus." For faith not only shows us a supernatural end as our aim, but teaches us that the very Power of God is ready to help us to reach it. Hence, supernatural trust does not lean upon man's strength, but upon God himself, and counts upon help from heaven in proportion to the knowledge of its own weakness; the sense of our own helplessness thus becomes the primary basis of our hope. By the light of revelation we see the relationship between human wretchedness and the divine Mercy, between us all-weak, and God Almighty. The more we recognize our weakness, the more readily God comes to our aid; the more childlike we are, the more fatherly is God. It is written: "*God resisteth the proud,*" and "*He hath exalted the humble.*"

In this life-giving truth Teresa found the secret of her holiness. She asked as a grace that she might have a keen sense of her littleness, and *might fathom its depths*. She sought, not to grow, but to become still smaller, to feel herself more and more weak,

that in God she might become more and more strong. In her St Paul's words were fully realized: "*Cum infirmor tunc potens sum*" ("When I am weak, then I am powerful," 2 Cor xii 10). Therefore she did not trust in her own works, her innocence, or the special graces God had granted her from her childhood, but solely in the merciful love of our Lord. "It is my very weakness which makes me dare to offer myself, O Jesus, as victim to thy love."* She fathomed the mystery of the divine Heart. "In order that love may be fully satisfied," she says again, "it must stoop even unto nothingness, and must transform that nothingness into fire."† Deep calleth unto deep: "It is not my works which give me confidence . . . I have found great peace in feeling utterly poor, and *counting on God alone for everything.*"‡ "Perfection appears easy, and I see that it is enough to acknowledge our nothingness, and like children surrender ourselves into the arms of the good God."§ She says elsewhere: "It is not because I have been preserved from mortal sin that I lift up my heart to God in trust and love. I feel that even had I on my conscience every crime that one could commit, I should lose nothing of my confidence; my heart broken with sorrow, I would throw myself into the arms of my Saviour."||

We must group together the chief passages setting forth this fundamental idea, for it is the starting-point of "the little way," to which it gives us the

* Chapter xi, p. 184.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Esprit*, p. 193.

§ Letters to her brother missionaries, p. 305.

|| Chapter xi, p. 177.

clue. Teresa reverts to it unceasingly, and always in the same clear terms: "What pleases [God] is to find me in love with my littleness and my poverty: it is the blind trust which I have in his mercy."^{*} She acknowledges in a very curious passage, which seems to apply to herself, that God "gently compels" certain souls "to recognize their nothingness and his almighty power." She says expressly that our progress in holiness depends on our progress in this spirit of childhood: "Dear Sister, do you not understand that to love Jesus and to be his victim of love the more weak and wretched we are the better material do we make for this consuming and transfiguring love? . . . Let us love our littleness and be content to feel no pleasure. Then we shall be truly poor in spirit, and Jesus will come to seek us however far off we may be, and transform us into flames of love. . . . Confidence alone must lead us to love."[†]

The chief secret of her strength was, then, in her very weakness. We might all be as strong as she, could we but realize our nothingness as she did. God would be as lavish with us if, like her, we looked for everything from him and nothing from ourselves without him. "If by any possibility," declares the little saint, "thou couldst find a soul weaker than mine, thou wouldst delight in loading her with still greater favours, provided that she abandoned herself with entire confidence to thine infinite mercy."[‡]

* *Letters*, p. 293.

‡ Chapter xi, p. 188.

† *Letters*, pp. 293-294.

This sense of our littleness—which is a fruit of the gift of Wisdom when it gives us a clear sight of the distance which separates our nothingness from him who is Being itself—is, however, only the negative foundation of our sanctification; it merely removes that pride which God resists, and which is the obstacle hindering grace from flooding the whole soul. This littleness admitted, we must with certainty expect our Lord's help, and surrender ourselves “into the arms of Jesus,” which are to be our lift. This simile sums up two fundamental ideas of the way of childhood: *recourse to the power of God, and self-surrender to that power of infinite lovingkindness.*

The dear “little saint” lived ever in the light of those words of Jesus: “*Without me you can do nothing.*” We treat the Saviour's words so lightly that these clear-cut truths, these words of life necessary for salvation, cannot find entrance, and make no impression on our stony hearts. But our ignorance, our illusions, and our temerity will not change the law of salvation. We cannot climb the heights of holiness till these words, clear and positive, have rung in our soul and stirred it to its depths. Without Christ, our geometry will serve us to build houses and to plant vineyards, to make ships and aircraft, to open new highways and to make war; but without him we can neither rightly dwell in our houses nor offer hospitality, nor rightly drink our wine nor break our bread, nor direct as men and as sons of God those machines invented by our genius and put to such ill use by our passions.

Without Christ we shall wage our accursed wars and win victories that bring no peace; our prosperity will turn to misfortune, and the misfortune will be bootless and bring no blessing. And if, in the anguish of our souls, we enter the presence of God, whose justice inspires terror, and who must be appeased by bloody sacrifices, what can we do without Christ? Can we, without him, believe, hope, love, expect and desire heaven, renounce the world and the flesh, suffer, resist temptation, and, above all, surrender ourselves utterly to the love of God and the dominion of his grace? No! At each step, *at each stirring of divine life, we need his help; therefore we must incessantly turn our souls towards his soul, our hearts to his Heart, and do everything under the sway of his power.* This is what the "little saint" effectually understood and constantly fulfilled. *It may be said that she did nothing without turning to Jesus and Mary by a continual movement of desire and prayer.* In the most literal sense her faith gave her hope all its daring; she expected of God all he has promised. "We obtain from God all that we hope for," she wrote—and she hoped for all things. This, it seems to me, was the effectual bond uniting her life of faith and her life of charity—her love reached the uttermost heights, because she counted on all the helps that faith sets before us. She did not rely on the ardour of her feelings—like St Peter; she leaned "*solely on the divine strength, solely on Christ.*"* These remarkable words are worthy of meditation: "Were I unfaithful, were I

* Pp. 258-259.

to commit even the smallest infidelity, I feel that my soul would be plunged into the most terrible anguish, and I should be unable to welcome death.” And when the Mother Prioress showed surprise at hearing her speak in this strain, she continued: “I am speaking of infidelity in the matter of pride. If, for example, I were to say: ‘I have acquired such or such a virtue and I can practise it’; or, again: ‘My God, thou knowest I love thee too much to dwell on one single thought against faith,’ straightway I should be assailed by the most dangerous temptations and should certainly yield. To prevent this misfortune I have but to say humbly and from my heart: ‘My God, I beseech thee not to let me be unfaithful.’ ”*

Teresa not only felt that she could do nothing of herself, that all her strength and power lay in Christ alone, but she also saw clearly that only by a purely gratuitous grace was she indefectibly united to the power of God. Yet, further, she could not of herself, left to her own weakness, rest “in the arms of Jesus.” How strong in her was this conviction that God gives us “to will and to accomplish,” and yet leaves us always liable to fall. It is God who upraises us, and by surrendering ourselves utterly to him we rise by and in him, borne wholly by his power, to those heights which lie infinitely beyond our ken and our attainment, and which are the very life of the blessed Trinity, shared in the vision of bliss. But God moves us so delicately, so respects our freedom, that at every moment it is within our power to fall into

sin, which is the effect of our own weakness and depends only upon us and in no way upon the first Cause; for to fall, weakness only is required. Thus, if God brings us infallibly to heaven, it is by extra grace and a secret of his merciful love, which always triumphs over those shortcomings for which we alone are answerable, as if God never wearied of raising us again whenever we, by our own fault, have fallen away from him. The humble little Sister saw plainly that to be kept unfailingly in God's hold we must fear to break away, and so have only to nestle there like small children in their mother's arms. "Thine arms, then, O Jesus," she sings, "are the lift which must raise me up even unto heaven. To get there I need not grow; on the contrary, I must remain little, I must become still less. O my God, thou hast gone beyond my expectation. . . ."* She says again: "Yes, I know when I show charity to others; it is simply Jesus acting in me, and the more closely I am united to him the more dearly I love my sisters."† "I am at peace. . . . For years I have not belonged to myself; I have surrendered myself wholly to Jesus, and he is free to do with me whatsoever he pleases."‡

And this, I think, was the simplest and most fruitful motion of her soul: the generous little Sister *surrendered and abandoned herself utterly* to the promptings of grace. This surrender demanded self-renunciation and entire submission to God.

* P. 136.

‡ P. 145.

† Chapter ix, p. 147.

But here again Teresa's genius lay in understanding that the best way of self-renunciation is *to yield ourselves to God's working, to love the very exigencies of Love*, and never to sacrifice them to the deep-rooted selfishness of our nature, which is always inclined to seek the line of least resistance. They who would enter whole-heartedly upon the "little way" must be faithful to this active "surrender," which is an heroic resolve to follow Christ in everything and, under the sway of charity, to fulfil all justice and all perfection. Entering, so to speak, *into the powers of the Lord*, as the Psalmist sings, we put ourselves wholly at God's disposal; and he leads us without let or hindrance even to the very summit of the "mountain of love": thus can we "*do all things through him who strengtheneth*" us. Surely the great secret of Teresa's holiness lies in this persevering and incessant self-surrender to Jesus in all things and for all things, to do *his good pleasure*. "Verily it was sweet," she wrote, "to surrender him my will. I want him to take possession of my faculties in such wise that my acts may no more be mine, or human, but divine—inspired and guided by the Spirit of Love."* Her meaning was that she desired no longer to act as of herself, but always subject to the action of the Holy Ghost and the working of God—dwelling under his sway, *sub Deo*, as St Thomas says. "*To be a true victim of love, we must surrender ourselves entirely*," she says elsewhere; "love will consume us only in the measure

* P. 250.

of our self-surrender.”* It is repeated unfaithfulness in this self-donation which will prevent “little souls” from following Teresa as their guide: to be wanting in fidelity here will be to come to a halt. The reason so many Christians fail to become saints is that among the Saviour’s disciples “so few hearts *surrender themselves without reserve to the infinite tenderness of his love.*”† Teresa’s ideal, as we have seen, was to make her whole being an act of love, “to live in an act of perfect love.” To realize her ideal she offered herself “as a victim of holocaust,” to be unceasingly consumed, and ready to receive “the floods of infinite tenderness gathered up in” [the Heart of Jesus]. Without shrinking, she aspired to receive the infinite weight of God’s love.

She knew that to surrender herself thus was to be sealed for a true martyrdom; for God’s action can leave no rest to the soul which is to traverse the purifications of sense and spirit in all their degrees; and though grace gives us “to will and to accomplish,” it is, nevertheless, we who will and act, and feel, moreover, all the burden of the effort, all the pain of the struggle. Though at times grace uplifts the soul, ordinarily it leaves us wrestling with the difficulties of the combat, without any sense of its presence and sweetness: fidelity is then more than ever needful. “Many,” says St Teresa, “make the excuse, ‘I have not the strength for such a sacrifice.’ *But let them only try.* It is sometimes difficult, but God never refuses the first

* P. 243.

† Chapter xi, p. 178.

grace which gives us the courage to overcome self. If we correspond, light comes at once, the heart is strengthened, and we go on from victory to victory.”*

Here is an incident which gives us the “little saint’s” secret. “A novice having read this passage of Ecclesiasticus: ‘*Mercy shall make a place for every man according to the merit of his works,*’† asked her young mistress: ‘Why does it say, “according to the merit of his works,” when St Paul speaks of “*being justified freely by his grace?*”’‡ Then the servant of God forcibly explained that though hope carried to the uttermost limits is made up of self-surrender and trust in God, it feeds only on *sacrifice*. She thus developed her idea: ‘We must do all we can, give without stint, *renounce self* continually, in a word, prove our love by all the good works in our power. But in truth, since all this is of no account, it is imperative that we should put our trust in him who alone sanctifies the works, and confess ourselves *unprofitable servants*, hoping that the good God will give us by his grace all that we desire.’’’§

Teresa thus surrendered herself generously, “without any reserve,” in continual renunciation involving constant effort for her nature; and Jesus laid hold upon her, took possession of her, and bore her aloft at his good pleasure to the hidden heights of heaven. She has sung of this ravishing of her soul, and its lofty flight on the wings of the

* *Esprit*, p. 17.

‡ Rom. iii 24.

† Eccl. xvi 15.

§ *Esprit*, pp. 17-18.

divine Eagle; and all these metaphors express the same fundamental idea, and reveal the same ardour of grateful love. "O Eternal Word! O my Saviour! Thou art the divine Eagle whom I love—who lurest me. Thou who, descending to this land of exile, didst will to suffer and to die, in order to bear away the souls of men and plunge them into the very heart of the blessed Trinity—love's eternal home. . . . How could my trust have any limits? I know that the saints have made themselves as fools for thy sake . . . they have done great things. I am too little for great things, and my folly it is to hope that thy love accepts me as a victim. . . . For as long a time as thou willest I shall remain—my eyes fixed on thee. I long to be allured by thy divine eyes; I would become love's prey. I have the hope that thou wilt one day swoop down upon me and, bearing me away to the source of all love, thou wilt plunge me at last into that glowing abyss, that I may become for ever its happy victim."*

The Saviour of the world thus made St Teresa his prey; the divine Eagle swooped down upon her and bore her away to the bosom of God. She lives now, deep in that "glowing abyss," in "the eternal embrace of merciful Love," in that vision, "face to face" for which she so greatly longed. There her tender love for men disposes of all the graces of her God: he refuses her nothing in heaven because she refused him nothing on earth. There, close to the Christ of our hearts, who is *always living to make intercession for us*, she con-

* Chapter xi, p. 188.

tinues the prayer which contains all her desires: "I entreat thee to choose in this world a legion of little victims worthy of thy love." And God, taking pity on us, answers by many miracles this cry of a sister soul. The "legion of little victims" grows day by day under the shower of roses. We need not marvel to see this weakness so powerful, this littleness so great, this humility so exalted. Let us ponder prayerfully our Lord's consoling words: "*I confess to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones.*"* God reveals to the "very little ones" not only the secret of getting to heaven, but of gaining *the first place* there; for it is written again: "*Amen I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven.*"†

Because she was one of the humblest among "these least," Teresa is now one of the greatest among the highest saints.

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* Luke x 21.

† Matt. xviii 3-4.

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